

Cruisin' On The Fantasy

by Melissa Martino

I can't believe our good fortune. My family and I have recently returned from yet another cruise that was as smooth as glass — this time aboard Carnival's 3-day Fantasy cruise to Nassau, Bahamas. As many times as I have taken a cruise, I have not experienced the dreaded seasickness that can accompany a rocky trip (I guess I should be knocking on wood right about here,) and so I can't say for sure how well the Fantasy's state-of-the-art stabilizers worked. Rumor has it that they work quite well in rough seas. If I had a rough sea experience, that would not deter me from taking another cruise, but unfortunately, folks that have a rough time on their first cruise cry "never again!" They are missing out on a wonderfully relaxing, or exciting (whatever you want to make it) vacation. I urge these travelers to give cruising another go at it. Feeling seasick is just about as bad as one can feel, but there are ways to prevent it with motion-sickness pills, the patch, or the pressure point wrist band. Also picking out the right cabin can help (middle of a ship, horizontally and vertically is usually the most stable location, not to mention most convenient.)

Kathie Lee is right when she calls it



the "Fun Ship". One deck has one kind of night spot after another for what seems to go on for miles — from a little piano bar to a big showroom with a Las Vegas-style revue, and everything in between. And, of course there is the casino where you can take a chance on winning back the cost of your trip. Yeah, right.

The Fantasy is among Carnival's largest ships, and although bigger means more passengers, we never had the feeling of being too crowded. The cabins are larg-

er than on most of the other affordable cruise ships, and the hallways are wider. Even on the roomy elevators, there was hardly ever a waiting problem.



The ship's decor is very glitzy — Euro-moderne style, and the cabins are very utilitarian — tidy, but not very glamorous. But then who spends time in the cabin staring at the walls? Not I. No. I spent my time eating my way through the

entire journey. I had prepared myself by dieting before I left so I could justify going wild in the dining room. This is the heart of the cruise for some of us — the sheer abundance of food, glorious food. Carnival knows this, and pampers us to no end with quantity, quality and accessibility. Don't feel like getting dressed to go to the dining room? Call room service. Any time. Scheduled feedings include: early morning breakfast, breakfast, mid-morning snack, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner, midnight buffet, late night mini-buffet. Whew! The food is not only plentiful, but excellent. We enjoyed everything — both taste and

presentation.

To work off the extra poundage you will put on, you can visit the fabulous spa on the top deck, replete with equipment to rival any gym, a sauna, a running track, a whirlpool, and an incredible panoramic

A newsletter is slipped under your cabin door during the night, informing you of the days shipboard activities. For those of you who have never taken a cruise, and are wondering just what goes on aboard ship, here is a sample of a day at sea's offerings gleaned from the newsletter:

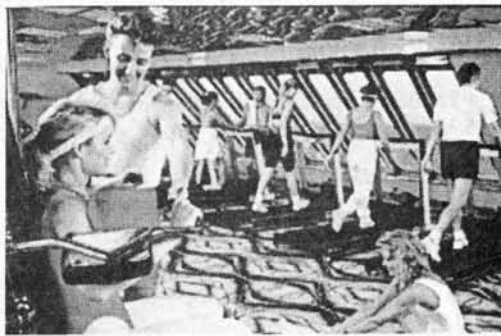
6:30am	coffee, tea & danish	1:00pm	ice carving demonstration
7:00am	spa & gym open	1:15pm	frog races & hairy chest contest & pool games
7:30am	walk a mile	1:30pm	late seating lunch
7:45am	1st seating breakfast	2:00pm	calypso music begins
8:00am	beauty salon open		dance class
	breakfast in the open air		learn art of massage
	beginners aerobics	2:30pm	newly wed & not-so-newly wed game
	continental breakfast buffet	3:00pm	bingo
	slot machines open	3:30pm	cookies & ice cream
	breakfast buffet	4:00pm	afternoon tea w/piano music
9:00am	duty free & gift shops open		intermediate aerobics
	shuffleboard available	5:00pm	hi/low impact aerobics
	late seating breakfast		happy hour begins
9:30am	navigation bridge highlights	7:00pm	Las Vegas style revue
10:00am	ping pong tournament	7:30pm	country music begins
	library open	8:30pm	Las Vegas style revue
	face make overs available	9:30pm	rock music begins
10:30am	juice bar open		fun piano music begins
	5-a-side volleyball contest	10:00pm	listening & dancing music begins
	TV trivia game		disco music begins
10:45am	galley tour		monster bingo
11:00am	anti-cellulite demonstration	10:30pm	guest talent show
11:30am	art auction	12:00am	late night pasta buffet
12:00pm	sun lovers lunch		comedy show
	video arcade open	1:30am	mini buffet
	main seating lunch		
1:00pm	slot tournament		

view of the ocean. When you've done that, you can relax with a massage, and visit the beauty salon so you can start all over again.

Keep in mind, these activities are there for you if you so choose, but if you just want to relax, you can find a lot of nice quiet places to just sit back, read a book, and enjoy the sea.

The cruise we took left from Port Canaveral on Thursday afternoon, arrived in Nassau Friday morning, left Nassau Saturday morning, and arrived back at Port Canaveral Sunday morning. While in Nassau you are free to come and go off the ship as you please. The shopping district is just a short walk from the ship. The cruise offers quite a few shore excursion packages, or you can go off on your own.

Personally, I find the straw market to be mostly kitschy souvenirs, and not worth the trouble. Shopping is not that interesting, although I can get my favorite perfume (Fiji by Guy LaRoche) there which is no longer sold in this country for some reason. We enjoy the water activities that are available in the beautiful waters of the Bahamas. Scuba diving and snorkeling are great, and should be experienced. One of the excursions is to Blue Lagoon Island, which is a private island with secluded beaches and hammocks for the ultimate in



lazing. You can snorkel right off the beaches there. People seemed to enjoy the Atlantis Submarine excursion which takes passengers down 80 ft. below the surface and cruises for 50 minutes. We'll try that

next time.

Carnival is introducing a new ship, the MS Inspiration, which will kick off with a Panama Canal cruise March 22. The cruise will depart Miami and end 15 days later in Los Angeles with stops at Cartagena, Colombia, Caldera, Costa Rica, Acapulco, Puerto Valarta and Mazatlan. Beginning April 28, the Inspiration will have weekly seven-day cruises to the Southern Caribbean sailing from San Juan, with stops at St. Thomas, St. Maarten, Dominica, Barbados and Martinique.

For more information on Carnival's cruises, please call your travel agent.

Happy sailing.

Selby Gardens Sponsors Trip to Venezuela

Sarasota's Selby Gardens will sponsor a trip to the Venezuela April 21 through April 30. This trip to an environmentally significant area of the world, where the orchid is the national flower, will include visits to the Canaima National Park, tropical rain forests, Andean villages and cloud forests. A highlight of the trip will be spectacular tour by air of Angel Falls and unexplored tepuis, giant geological formations that rise vertically above savannahs and jungles.

The ten-day trip will be escorted throughout by Selby's herbarium manager, Bruce Holst. Mr. Holst is intimately familiar with this area of Venezuela, having co-authored two of eleven proposed volumes on the flora of the region. For more information, call (941)366-5731.

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