

Ports Of Call



Created by P J Dagnall

CONTENTS

CONTENTS	1
INTRODUCTION	17
WESTERN EUROPE	18
BELGIUM	18
Antwerp	18
Zeebrugge	18
Blankenberge	19
Bruges	20
Osstende (Ostend)	21
Ghent	21
GERMANY	22
Bremen	22
Bremerhaven	23
Hamburg	23
River Elbe (Cruising)	24
Weser River (Cruising)	24
HOLLAND	24
Amsterdam	24
Rotterdam	25
ATLANTIC SOUTHERN EUROPE COAST	26
FRANCE	26
Bordeaux	26
Boulogne-sur-Mer	26
Brest	27
Cherbourg	27
Dunkirk	28
Honfleur	29
La Rochelle	29
Le Havre	31
Paris	32
Le Verdon	33
Rouen	33
St Nazaire	34
PORTUGAL	35
Lisbon	35
Porto	36
Portimao	38
Praia da Rocha	38
SPAIN	39
Aviles	39
Biarritz	40
Bilbao	40
Cadiz	41
El Ferrol	43
Gijon	43
Getxo	44
La Coruna	44
San Sebastian	46
Santander	47

Cruise Destinations

Seville	47
Vilagarcía de Arousa	49
Vigo	49

AROUND BRITAIN 51

CHANNEL ISLANDS 51

Guernsey - St Peters Port	51
---------------------------	----

ENGLAND 53

Falmouth	53
Liverpool	53
Scilly Isles	54
Southampton	55

FAROE ISLANDS 55

Klasvik	55
Torshavn	56

NORTHERN IRELAND 56

Belfast	56
Londonderry	57

SCOTLAND 57

Dundee	57
Edinburgh	58
Greenock/Glasgow	59
Invergordon	60
Kirkwall	61
Lerwick	62
Oban	63
Portree, Isle of Skye	63
Scrabster	64
Stornaway Isle of Lewis:	64
Tobermory	65

SOUTHERN IRELAND 65

Cobh (Cork)	65
Cork	66
Dublin	67
Galway	67
Killybegs	68
Ringaskiddy	68
Waterford	69

WALES 69

Holyhead	69
Milford Haven	70

THE ATLANTIC (CANARIES) 71

MADEIRA 71

Funchal	71
---------	----

CANARIES 73

Fuerteventura	73
Gran Canaria	74
Lanzarote	75
La Gomera	77
La Palma	78
Tenerife	79

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN	83
Gibraltar	83
FRANCE	86
Ajaccio / Corsica	86
Calvi / Corsica	87
Cannes	87
Marseilles	88
Monte Carlo/Monaco	89
Nice	90
Propriano / Corsica	91
Sete	91
St. Raphael	92
St Tropez	92
Toulon	93
Villefranche	94
ITALY	95
Amalfi	95
Capri	95
Elba	96
Civitavecchia	97
Rome	97
La Spezia	100
Livorno	101
Florence	102
Pisa	103
Genoa	103
Marina di Carrara	104
Naples	105
Piombino	106
Portofino	107
Rapallo	107
Salerno	108
San Remo	108
Santa Margherita	109
Savona	109
Sorrento	110
MALTA	111
Valetta	111
SARDINIA	113
Alghero	113
Cagliari	113
Olbia	114
SICILY	115
Catania	115
Giardini-Naxos	116
Messina Strait	116
Messina	117
Palermo	118
Taormina	118
Trapani	119
SPAIN	119
Alicante	119
Almeria	120
Barcelona	121
Cartagena	123

Cruise Destinations

Ceuta	124
Cuidadela (Menorca)	124
Ibiza	125
Malaga	126
Mallorca (Majorca)	128
Palma	129
Mehon (Menorca)	130
Palamos	131
Puerto Banus	131
Roses	132
Tarragona	132
Valencia	133

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN **135**

ALBANIA **135**

Sarande	135
---------	-----

CROATIA **136**

Dubrovnik	136
Hvar	137
Korcula	138
Mljet	138
Rijeka	138
Rovinj	139
Sibenik	139
Split	140
Trogir	141
Vis	141
Zadar	141

CYPRUS **142**

Larnaca	142
Limassol	143
Nicosia	143
Famagusta	144

GREECE **144**

Aghios Nikolaos	144
Athens	145
Corfu	147
Chania (Crete)	147
Gythion	148
Heraklion (Crete)	149
Igoumenitsa	150
Kalamata	151
Katakolon	151
Olympia	152
Kefalonia	153
Khios	154
Lesbos	154
Monemvasia	155
Mykonos	155
Nauplion	156
Piraeus	157
Patmos	157
Rhodes	158
Santorini	159
Skiathos	161
Souda Bay (Crete)	161
Syros	162
Volos	163

Cruise Destinations

Zakinthos (Zante)	163
ITALY	164
Ancona	164
Bari	165
Brindisi	165
Crotone	166
Ravenna	167
Taranto	167
Trieste	168
Venice	168
ISRAEL	171
Ashdod	171
Haifa	171
MONTENEGRO	172
Bar	172
Kotor	172
SLOVENIA	173
Koper	173
Portorož	174
TURKEY	174
Dardanelles	174
Cesme	175
Istanbul	175
Kusadasi	176
Marmaris	177
BLACK SEA & BOSPORUS	178
BULGARIA	178
Burgas	178
UKRAINE	178
Odessa	178
Yalta	179
NORTH AFRICA	180
MOROCCO	180
Agadir	180
Casablanca	180
Tangiers	181
Taroudant	182
NORTHERN EUROPE	183
NORWAY	183
The Fjords	184
The Aurlandsfjord (Flam)	184
The Geirangerfjord (Geiranger)	184
Hardangerfjord (Rosedal)	184
The Innvikfjorden (Olden)	184
The Lustrafjorden (Skjolden)	184
Nærøyfjord (Cruise)	184
The Nordfjord (Olden)	185
Oslofjord (Oslo)	185
The Romsdalsfjord (Andalsnes) & (Molde)	185
The Sognefjord (Flam) & (Skjolden)	185
The Storfjorden (Hellesylt) & (Geiranger)	185
The Sunnlyvsfjorden (Hellesylt) & (Geiranger)	185

Cruise Destinations

Alesund	186
Alta	187
Andalsnes	188
Arendal	189
Bergen	190
Bodo	191
Eidfjord	192
Flam	192
Geiranger	194
Gravdal, Lofoten Islands	195
Hammerfest	195
Haugesund	196
Hellesylt	197
Honningsvag	197
Kirkenes	198
Kristiansand	198
Kristiansund	199
Leknes - Lofoten Islands	199
Molde	200
Narvik	200
O	200
Rosendal	203
Skjolden	203
Stavanger	204
Tromso	205
Trondheim	206
Ulvik	207
Vesterålen	207
ICELAND	208
Akureyri	208
Eskifjordur	209
Grundarfjordur	209
Heimaey	210
Husavik	210
Ísafjörður (Ice Fjord)	211
Reykjavik	211
Seydisfjordur	213
GREENLAND	213
Kangerlussuaq	213
Nanortalik	214
Narsarsuaq	214
Nuuk	215
Qaqortoq	215
Sisimiut	216
Tasiilaq	216
Prins Christiansund – Cruising	217
Torssukátak – Cruising	217
SPITSBERGEN	217
Longyearbyen	217
Ny Alesund	218
Notes on a Northern Lights Cruise	219
BALTIC	220
DENMARK	220
Aalborg	220
Bornholm	220
Copenhagen	221
Fredericia	222

Cruise Destinations

Helsingor _____	222	
Kalundborg _____	223	
Skagen _____	223	
ESTONIA _____	224	
Saaremaa _____	224	
Tallinn _____	225	
FINLAND _____	226	
Helsinki _____	226	
Turku _____	227	
GERMANY _____	227	
Kiel Canal _____	227	
Kiel _____	227	
Rostock _____	228	
Sassnitz _____	229	
Travemünde _____	229	
Warnemunde _____	230	
LATVIA _____	230	
Riga _____	230	
Ventspils _____	231	
LITHUANIA _____	231	
Klaipėda _____	231	
NORWAY _____	232	
Kristiansand _____	232	
Oslofjord (Oslo) _____		233
Oslo _____	233	
POLAND _____	234	
Gdynia _____	234	
Gdansk _____	234	
RUSSIA _____	235	
St Petersburg _____	235	
SWEDEN _____	238	
Gothenburg _____	238	
Helsingborg _____	238	
Karlskrona _____	239	
Nynäshamn _____	239	
Stockholm _____	240	
Visby _____	242	
TRANS-ATLANTIC _____	243	
MADEIRA _____	243	
Funchal _____	243	
Porto Santo _____	245	
AZORES _____	246	
Horta _____	246	
Ponta Delgada _____	246	
Praia de Vitoria _____	247	
CARIBBEAN _____	248	
Barbados _____	248	
Aruba _____	250	
Antigua _____	252	
Bequia _____	254	
Bonaire _____	255	
Curacao _____	255	

Cruise Destinations

Dominica	257
Grand Cayman	258
Grand Turk	259
Grenada	260
Guadeloupe	261
Isla Margharita	263
Martinique	263
Mayreau	264
Nevis	265
St Barts	265
St Kitts	266
St Lucia	267
St Maarten	269
St Vincent	271
Tobago	272
Tortola	272
Trinidad	274
Virgin Gorda	275
BAHAMAS	276
Freeport	276
Great Stirrup Cay	276
Half Moon Cay	277
Nassau	277
Princess Cays	278
BELIZE	278
Belize City	278
Harvest Caye	279
BRITISH ISLANDS	279
Bermuda	279
U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS	280
Saint Croix	280
St John	281
St. Thomas	282
COLOMBIA	283
Cartagena	283
Santa Marta	284
COSTA RICA	284
Limon	284
CUBA	285
Havana	285
Isla de la Juventud	286
Santiago De Cuba	286
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	287
Amber Cove	287
Catalina Island	288
La Romana	288
Santo Domingo	289
GUATEMALA	289
Santo Tomas de Castilla	289
HAITI	290
Labadee	290
HONDURAS	290
Roatan	290
Trujillo	291

Cruise Destinations

JAMAICA	291
Montego Bay and Ochos Rios	291
MEXICO	293
Costa Maya	293
Cozumel	294
Progreso	295
PANAMA	295
Colon	295
Cristobal	296
PUERTO RICO	296
San Juan	296
EASTERN COAST OF THE ATLANTIC	298
USA (North)	298
Baltimore	298
Bar Harbour, Maine	298
Boston, Massachusetts	299
Newport, Rhode Island	299
New York	300
Portland, Maine	302
USA (South)	303
Charleston	303
Key West	303
Miami	304
Mobile	305
New Orleans	306
Orlando	307
Port Everglades	308
Port Canaveral	308
Tampa	309
CANADA	310
Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island	310
Corner Brook	310
Gaspe	311
Halifax, Nova Scotia	311
Iles de la Madeleine	312
Quebec City	313
Saguenay	313
Saint John, New Brunswick	314
Sept-Iles	315
St. John's, Newfoundland	315
Sydney, Nova Scotia	316
AROUND THE WORLD TRIP	317
Tips and advice.	317
THE PORTS	319
PANAMA CANAL	319
PACIFIC OCEAN SIDE	319
PANAMA	319
Fuerte Amador	319
Panama City	320
COSTA RICA	321
Puerto Caldera	321
Puntarenas	321

Cruise Destinations

NICARAGUA	322
Corinto	322
San Juan Del Sur	323
GUATEMALA	323
Puerto Quetzal	323
MEXICO	324
Acapulco	324
Cabo San Lucas	324
Colon	325
Ensanada	325
Huatulco	326
Manzanillo	326
Mazatlan	327
Puerto Vallarta	327
USA	328
Los Angeles	328
San Diego	329
San Francisco	330
Santa Barbara	330
CHILE	331
Easter Island	331
UNITED KINGDOM	331
Pitcairn Island	331
HAWAIIAN ISLANDS	332
Hilo	332
Honolulu – Oahu	332
Lahaina (Maui)	333
Nawiliwili, (Kauai)	334
MARQUESAS ISLANDS	335
Nuku Hiva	335
TAHITI	336
Papeete	336
FRENCH POLYNESIA	337
Bora Bora	337
Moorea	337
Raiatea	338
COOK ISLANDS	338
Rarotonga	338
SAMOA	339
Apia	339
Pago Pago	339
THE INTERNATIONAL DATELINE	340
TONGA	340
Nuku'alota	340
Niuafou'ou	340
Nuku'alofa	341
Vava'u Champagne Bay	341
FIJI	342
Lautoka	342
Port Denarau (Fiji)	342
Dravuni Island	342
Suva	343
VANUATU ISLANDS	343

Cruise Destinations

Champagne Bay _____	343	
Wala _____	344	
Luganville _____	344	
Mystery Island _____	345	
Vila _____	345	
NEW CALEDONIA _____		346
Lifou _____	346	
Mare _____	346	
Noumea _____	347	
Isle of Pines _____	347	
NEW ZEALAND _____		348
Akaroa _____	348	
Auckland _____	348	
Bay of Islands _____	349	
Dunedin _____	350	
Gisborne _____	351	
Fjord National Park _____		351
Milford Sound (Cruise) _____		351
Doubtful Sound, (Cruise) _____		352
Dusky Sound (Cruise) _____		352
Napier _____	352	
Pahia _____	353	
Picton _____	353	
Port Chalmers _____	354	
Tauranga _____	354	
Wellington _____	355	
AUSTRALIA _____		356
GREAT BARRIER REEF - AUSTRALIA _____		356
Adelaide _____	356	
Airlie Beach (Whitsunday Islands) _____		357
Albany _____	358	
Brisbane _____	358	
Broome _____	359	
Burnie (Tasmania) _____	359	
Busselton _____	360	
Cairns _____	360	
Darwin _____	361	
Eden _____	361	
Esperance _____	362	
Fraser Island _____	362	
Fremantle _____	363	
Geraldton _____	363	
Hamilton Island (Whitsunday Islands) _____	364	
Hobart (Tasmania) _____	364	
Kangaroo Island _____	365	
Margaret River _____	366	
Melbourne _____	367	
Newcastle _____	368	
Perth _____	368	
Port Douglas _____	369	
Sydney _____	369	
Townsville _____	370	
Whitsunday Islands _____	371	
Yorkeys Knob _____	371	

Cruise Destinations

PAPUA NEW GUINEA	372
Alotau	372
Kiriwina	372
Rabaul	373
PHILIPPINES	373
Manila	373
RUSSIA	374
Petropavlovsk	374
JAPAN	374
Aomori	374
Hakodate	375
Kagoshima	376
Kochi	376
Muroran	377
Nagasaki	377
Osaka	378
Otaru	379
Sakaiminato	379
Shimizu	380
Tokyo	380
Yokohama	381
SOUTH KOREA	382
Busan	382
Incheon	382
Seoul	383
CHINA	383
Hong Kong	383
Shanghai	385
TAIWAN	386
Keelung	386
Kaohsiung	387
Taipei	387
VIETNAM	388
Chan May	388
Danang	388
Hoi An	389
Hue	389
Ha Long Bay	390
Hanoi	391
Ho Chi Min City (Saigon)	391
Nha Trang	393
Phu My	393
CAMBODIA	394
Sihanoukville	394
THAILAND	395
Khlong Toei	395
Bangkok	395
Ko Samui	395
Laem Chabang	396
Phuket	396
MALAYSIA	397
Kuala Lumpur	397
Kota Kinabalu	399
Langkawi	399

Cruise Destinations

Penang _____	400
Port Kelang _____	401
SINGAPORE _____	402
Singapore _____	402
INDONESIA _____	403
Bali _____	403
Komodo _____	404
Semerang _____	404
SRI LANKA _____	405
Colombo _____	405
Hambantota _____	405
INDIA _____	406
Chennai _____	406
Cochin _____	406
Goa (Mormugao) _____	407
Mumbai _____	408
New Mangalore _____	409
ARAB STATES _____	410
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES _____	410
Abu Dhabi _____	410
Dubai _____	411
Sir Bani Yas Island _____	412
BAHRAIN _____	413
Manama _____	413
OMAN _____	413
Khasab _____	413
Muscat _____	414
Salalah _____	415
JORDAN _____	416
Aqaba _____	416
QATAR _____	416
Doha _____	416
EGYPT _____	417
Port Said _____	417
Port Soqna _____	417
Safaga _____	418
Hurghada _____	418
Sharm El Sheikh _____	418
Suez Canal _____	419
SOUTH AMERICA & SOUTH ATLANTIC _____	420
ARGENTINA _____	420
Buenos Aires _____	420
Puerto Madryn _____	421
Ushuaia _____	421
BRAZIL _____	422
The Amazon _____	422
Alter do Chão, Pará _____	422
Icoaraci, for Belem (Brazil) _____	423
Boca Da Valeria _____	423
Buzios _____	424
Fortaleza _____	424
Macapa (Cruise Past) _____	425

Cruise Destinations

Manaus _____	425
Parintins _____	426
Rio de Janeiro _____	426
Salvador _____	427
Santarem, Brazil _____	427
Santos _____	427
CHILE _____	428
Arica _____	428
Coquimbo _____	429
Puerto Montt _____	429
Punta Arenas _____	430
San Antonio _____	430
Santiago _____	431
Valparaiso _____	431
Amelia Glacier (Cruise Past) _____	432
Cape Horn (Cruise Past) _____	432
Beagle Channel (Cruise Past) _____	432
Canal Sarmiento (Cruise Past) _____	433
Chilean Fjords (Cruise Past) _____	433
Glacier Alley (Cruise Past) _____	433
Magellan Straits (Cruise Past) _____	434
PIO X Glacier (Cruise Past) _____	434
ECUADOR _____	435
Manta _____	435
PERU _____	435
Callao _____	435
Lima _____	436
Paracas _____	436
Pisco _____	437
FRENCH GUYANA _____	438
Devil's Island (or Cayenne) _____	438
Îles du Salut _____	438
URUGUAY _____	438
Montevideo _____	438
FALKLANDS _____	439
Port Stanley _____	439
CAPE VERDE ISLANDS _____	440
Santiago _____	440
St. Vincente _____	440
INDIAN OCEAN _____	441
MALDIVES _____	441
Male _____	441
Uligamu _____	441
MADAGASCAR _____	442
Tulear _____	442
MAURITIUS _____	442
Port Louis _____	442
Praslin Island _____	443
REUNION _____	443
Pointe des Galets _____	443

Cruise Destinations

SEYCHELLES	444
Port Victoria	444
Praslin Island	444
ilhouette, Cruise by	445
AFRICA	445
MOZAMBIQUE	445
Maputo	445
NAMIBIA	446
Walvis Bay	446
SENEGAL	446
Dakar	446
SOUTH AFRICA	447
Cape Town	447
Durban	447
Mossel Bay	448
Port Elizabeth	448
Richards Bay	449
PACIFIC OCEAN CANADA & ALASKA	450
CANADA	450
Vancouver	450
Victoria	451
ALASKA	451
Aleutian Islands (Dutch Harbor)	451
Glacier Bay	452
Hubbard Glacier	452
Icy Strait	453
Juneau	453
Ketchikan	454
Sitka	454
Skagway	455
Tracy Arm Fjord	455
Whittier	456
Suggestions	456

INTRODUCTION

One of the ideas of cruising is to visit different ports, extend your knowledge and maybe go back to that destination for a longer stay at some time.

There are many cruise related books out there that give excellent information on the ports visited by cruise ships. However, this is something different. This document is made up of actual experiences, as well as my own experience in some of these Ports Of Call, quite a lot of the other information has been supplied by many seasoned cruisers who have visited these ports and experienced the delights that are on offer, some good some bad and my thanks goes out to them all.

So, to help in planning what and where to go this is a small breakdown on some of the delights in and around your port of call. It gives some suggestions of what is available close to the town and in some instances, not all, places a little further away. It is mainly aimed at the British cruiser, but can be used by anyone who has a liking for cruising.

At almost every port there will be opportunities for seeing the sites on a DIY basis and normally a lot cheaper than the cruise lines own tours, but do not discount the cruise line tours. If you do opt for a cruise line excursion then please bear in mind that the total time of the trip will include traveling there and back, so a 5 hour trip could be only 2 hrs at the destination if the travel time is 1.2 hrs each way.

Do your research and see what is on offer and at what price. Please remember the information has been gathered over a period of time and some venues/excursions/trip operators may not be available now, so please do some research prior to visiting. Where prices are given these were when the port of call was visited and may not be current, they will most probably have gone up. A final item to keep in mind is: if you do decide to do your own thing then make sure you are back on your ship before it sails, the ship will only wait for people who are on an official excursion. It will not wait for anyone doing their own thing, be warned.

There is a lot of information on-line and a little research goes a long way.

This web site is very good, it lists 1200 ports that cruise ships visit:

<http://www.whatsinport.com/index.htm>

This one gives advice and maps you can download.

<https://www.tomspportguides.com/>

Another suggestion is to join a cruise forum. There are many out there, even if you have a Facebook account there are cruise groups. These forums and groups are a fantastic place to start your research. Remember the only stupid question is the unasked one. Anything that will make your cruise holiday special is worth enquiring about.

However, if you do not feel like getting off the ship, remember the ship is a destination in itself and sometimes there is nothing better than to stay on board whilst in port/at anchor, when half or more of the passengers are ashore and enjoy all the services that are available.

To use this document.

Go back up to the Contents Page, 2-16 above, find a place you would like information on, hover the mouse pointer over the place-name and click, you should now be at your chosen destination.

WESTERN EUROPE

BELGIUM

Antwerp



Antwerp is a port city on Belgium's River Scheldt, with history dating to the Middle Ages.

Lively Antwerp is a hidden gem. Its medieval streets, Renaissance monuments and vibrant nightlife tend to be overshadowed by its reputation as centre of the diamond trade and as the world's fifth-largest port. Cycling is a popular choice for getting around this stylish Flemish city.

The ship berths really close to the centre of the town.

Great for pottering.

Suggestions

Depending on what you are interested in there are some great and unusual museums in Antwerp. There is a fascinating collection of old musical instruments in a lovely old building just off the main square in the Vleeshuis (Butchers Hall). There is also a wonderful museum marking the history of printing just a few streets down from where the ship berths at the Plantin Moretus Museum. There is often a flea market right outside the entrance to this museum.

In the summer months there is an open topped tourist bus which departs from just outside the cruise terminal and does an hour long circular route.

Central Station; A strange suggestion, but one of the best train stations in the world. There are no words to describe its majesty. Huge and incredible artistically great. You cannot miss it for any reason.

Cathedral of Our Lady; Holy gothic! Gigantic! Similar to Notre Dame in Paris. Many Ruben's paintings make it more beautiful.

Grote Markt van Antwerpen; The main square is surrounded by wonderful old guild hall buildings and has a fountain in the middle. Cafes and restaurants abound in and around the square.

Zeebrugge

From this Belgian port there's an overwhelming amount of things to see and do ashore. The ship docks in the industrial port. You do need to take the shuttle to the ports main gates or you can take the shuttle to Blankenberge station. The trains in Belgium are cheap and reliable, a good alternative to cruise excursions.

If you want to stay in port then there is a tram that goes from just outside the port along the seaside, it isn't a hop on or off but you can go to Blankenberge for the day or even onto Ostend.

However, this port is your stop for **Bruges**, **Blankenberge** and **Ostend**.

Now, there are a number of ways to get to Bruges, ships excursion the most costly, Taxi - if more than two the mid-range, Tourist coach, again a mid priced option and the train the cheapest.

For DIY: The station to use is in Blankenberge and there is normally a free shuttle bus to it. The shuttle takes about 10 minutes; you then pay €6.20pp return (2016) to get the train to Bruges. The trains run from Blankenberge at 10 past the hour every hour and leave Bruges on the way back at 25 to the hour every hour. But, on Sundays these timings are different so check before you board your train. Check out timings here: <https://www.trainline.eu/train-times/blankenberge-to-brugge>

Cruise Destinations

Another way to get into Bruges is by taxi, this is about a 20 minute ride. The standard fare in 2015 was €60 each way, so the more of you there are the better the fare. It is suggested you book in advance because the queue when you dock can be quite long. One link:

<http://www.ronystaxis.com/?page=start&lang=en> You can email them to book and you pay on the day.

Try a firm called Viator who operate as. '**Cruise Express**' in Belgium. You can book in advance, confirmation will be sent to you which you exchange on the day for your tickets, or can also buy tickets on the day if you have not booked. You take the free shuttle bus to the port entrance (you cannot make your own way out of Zeebrugge you have to take the bus) at the port entrance turn right and you see a 'cruise express' sign less than a 2 minute walk to the bus pick up point. Buses run every 30 minutes. Cost £17 each. No hassle and good service. For the return journey then make your way to where you were dropped off and you are taken back to the port gates.

Not adventurous enough to be bothered with doing it all DIY then try Bruges on your Own, £36pp. (2016) Coach to Bruges, you are given a map each and on the way you will have a lovely talk about the countryside. On arrival at Bruges you will be guided into Bruges via a very scenic route with lots of information provided and then left to do our own thing for several hours. At the appointed time you will be met at the pick-up point - another load of information and then a very gentle return to the ship.

Just to let you know that the train station and drop off point for the DIY coach tour are very close. From here it is about a 15-20 min walk into town over some cobbled paths.

Other tours from this port include::

The War Graves And Ypres Tour: Ypres and the Menin Gate is beautiful and fascinating tour. There is beautiful country side and time to shop in Ypres after the trip where there are plenty of chocolate shops and lace shops.

Discover the city of **Ghent**: Undoubtedly one of Europe's best kept secrets, Ghent is usually overlooked in favour of its better known neighbours Bruges and Brussels. With its enchanting gabled houses, ancient churches, little canals, and chilled-out café culture, Ghent is similar to Bruges in many aspects. But whilst Bruges is very much a 'museum city,' Ghent has an edgier, local feel to it;

Blankenberge



Blankenberge is a Belgian coastal town with a long beach and promenade, plus a busy marina. The Belgium Pier stretches out into the North Sea, offering views of the seafront.

The shuttle bus will drop you here and you can either stay or get the train into Bruges. It is a lovely little town with a stunning beach. There are lots of shops, bars, restaurants and sea front cafes.

What a lovely beach at Blankenberge. So many cruise passengers pass it by on the way to Bruges. Chocolates cheaper in Blankenberge than Bruges as well

Suggestions

Belgium Pier; Very unique pier. Check it out if you are there.

Sea Life; Sea Life in Blankenberge is well worth a visit if you ever visit the area. There is enough to see, and lots to learn, there is also enough places to get an ice cream, drink or something to eat all over the park.

Cruise Destinations

Belle Epoque Centrum; This interesting museum is located in the heart of old Blankenberge at Elisabethstraat 24 and, in a row of 2 of the original 19th Century townhouses, sympathetically recreates the look and feel of part of one of these, including a reception/dining area. It is arranged over 3 floors (there is a lift!). The front desk hands out a guide in English (plus a number of other languages) which explains all the exhibits clearly.

For something different try the shuttle to Blankenberg and then the tram to Ostende. This goes from the square in Blankenberg opposite the train station. It costs 4 Euros return and takes about 45 minutes. You can actually get on this tram from just outside the port at Zeebruges.

The trams are new, silent. They run from 6:00 am until almost midnight and stops at every station, although you should be careful to push the button and let the driver know you want to get out. The tram comes every twenty minutes in offseason and every ten in the summer. And that is because it is not only for tourists. Thousands of Belgians use it every day to commute.

You could see the whole Belgium coastline in a single day? You take a ride with the tram on the longest tramline in the world and the only one that crosses the entire seacoast of a country. It has 68 km, crosses the Belgium coast and it's called De Kusttram. It starts right near the border between France and Belgium in the city De Panne and stops in the city Knokke-Heist at the border between Belgium and Netherlands. It crosses sixteen major cities and has seventy stops. A big part of this tramline curves along the North Sea, which definitely offers wonderful landscapes and makes this route a very good idea if you want to visit Belgium. It takes approximately two hours and twenty minutes from one end to the other, but I have never tried it

A journey from one end to another costs €2, A day pass costs €5, A 3-day pass is €10 Plus you get free wifi.

Bruges



It's small enough to wander and be enchanted. But if you need a little inspiration for ways to spend your time.

Once you get to Bruges you'll find 3 tourist offices: The first tourist office can be found at the exit of the railway station. The second larger tourist office is located inside the Concert building, just 10 minutes walking from the railway station. A third office is inside the Historium on the Market square. The offices are open Monday till Saturday from 10am - 5pm and on Sundays 10am - 2pm.

Suggestions

Bruges is a charming maze of cobblestoned streets and canals and at its very heart lies Market Square. Lined with fairy-tale facades and lively cafés, this vast open square is a constant hive of activity. Dominating proceedings is the huge Belfry Tower. This costs €8 for people aged between 24 to 64 those outside of that age bracket pay €6, (2014). There are 366 steps to the top and very fortunately there are a few places to stop and rest. Some of those places have small exhibits to do with the whole tower. If you go up the tower be prepared for the pain of descent and the pain in the backs of your legs next day!, however the climb to the top of the tower is worth it for the outstanding views of Bruges.

There are many nice cafes around the city that serve hot chocolate made with real chocolate melted into the hot milk. A favourite is Old Chocolate Shop, 1, Mariastraat. You get a large cup of hot milk, chocolate bowl filled with chocolate buttons that you drop into your milk and with the whisk supplied stir, heaven in a cup. you can choose between, dark, milk, white and some others like Baileys, Chilli, but I will leave you there and let you find it and try for yourself. Cost, 2 hot chocolates, 2 small bars of chocolate, 2 biscuits and a grand cost of €10. ps, the cafe opens at 10am and there are not many tables and chairs.

Cruise Destinations

Belgian chips and mayonnaise are good, as are mussels. Beer with your meals (recommended like wine) is a novelty. For a nice relaxed beer try, 2be Beer Wall, just off Burg, beers from 3.5% to 9%, and are served in small, medium and large glasses. You can either sit in the small interior or opt for the garden where you have views over the canals.

If you are thinking of purchasing chocolates then ladies, every other shop is a chocolate shop so there is no need to buy straight away.

There are Horse and carriage rides around the town, these cost €50 for up to 5 people.

Take A Canal Ride In Bruges: 5 Starting points: at the back of the Belfry Tower, City Hall and near the Church of Our Lady. The tour takes 30 minutes and starts and ends at the embarkation point of your choice (it's NOT hop on hop off). Each boat company does the same tour, gives the same explanation and has the same prices. Adults pay € 7.60 and children under 12 year pay € 3.40 (these are 2013 prices). Individuals don't need to book in advance; you can buy your ticket on the day itself. Be warned, they cram you in.

Osstende (Ostend)



Ostend is a Belgian coastal city and municipality, located in the province of West Flanders.

Ostend is a cosmopolitan city with a harbour and yacht-basin. Visitors will be amazed by all there is to see and do.

One of Ostend's main, and maybe lesser known, trump cards is the gastronomy. What better place to sample the sea's delicacies than on the seaside. There are many restaurants, ranging from exclusive hot spots to cosy bistros, so there is

something to suit everyone's taste and budget.

Suggestions

Atlantic Wall Museum; Quite a good museum with lots to see and do. A demanding walk for some as there's lots of steps, tunnels and slopes to traverse to explore the bunker complex. There are toilets near the entrance but no cafe or anything like that.

Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul; Right in the middle of the town (and very close to the railway station if you are going to Ostend by train, this church is very beautiful and is worth the time to visit.

Albert I Promenade; The promenade is nice and wide and makes a good walk with the modern artwork at the entrance to port and marina.

Catch the tram back to Zeebrugge, via Blankenburge.

Ghent



Ghent is a port city in northwest Belgium. During the Middle Ages it was a prominent city-state. Today it's a university town and cultural hub. Its pedestrianized centre is known for medieval architecture such as 12th-century Gravensteen castle and the Graslei, a row of guildhalls beside the Leie river harbour.

Ghent is a historic city, yet at the same time a contemporary one. The modern daily life of the city's active inhabitants plays itself out against a gorgeous historical backdrop.

Cruise Destinations

Suggestions

Ghent City Centre; Very dense old city centre, where it is marvellous to stroll around between the old buildings, churches or along the canal. You will always encounter small shops or bars and it is great to sit or look around.

Graslei and Korenlei; An amazing little walk along the water, lined with cute architecture and awesome little shops. Numerous little bridges make for excellent photo ops as well.

St Michael's Bridge; St. Michael Bridge is located in the historical centre of Ghent. The bridge is one of the best picture taking points in the old town. Around the bridge, there are some other historically significant buildings such as St. Michael's Church, the Castle of Counts, St. Bavo's Cathedral.

Gravensteen Castle; The Gravensteen Castle is an impressive castle in the very middle of the city of Ghent. It will especially enchant you if you like the Middle Ages. The city view from the top of the castle is astounding. The inside of the castle is basically a museum of torture. Not advised for the faint-hearted.

GERMANY

Bremen



Bremen is a city straddling the Weser River in northwest Germany. It's known for its role in maritime trade, represented by Hanseatic buildings on the Market Square.

The second most populous town in North Germany, Bremen brings the high-tech, science and space industries together beneath a truly metropolitan backdrop. In a city where innovation, beauty and sophistication meet, it's impossible not to feel the life force. In this 1,200-year-old Hanseatic city, visit the Schlachte Promenade on the River Weser, the

full-sized Columbus Space Module of the International Space Station and the Universum Science centre. Oh, and "Hanseatic" refers to an alliance of trading cities in the 13th-17th centuries. But you probably knew that.

Suggestions

Schnoor Viertel; The original settlement area of Bremen is now a warren of small shops and restaurants. Make sure to wander down the really small alleyways.

Marktplatz; If you're in Bremen it would be a mistake to miss the Marktplatz. This is one of the oldest squares in the City. Some of the building date back to the 16th century. Well worth a visit.

Bremen Town Hall; The Rathaus in Bremen is a special place to visit. Its Hanseatic architecture is stunning and the history it exudes is amazing.

Town Musicians of Bremen; The fairy tale by the Grim Brothers took one step forward with this lovely statue that is located next to the Town Hall. It's a nice picture spot for children and adults. If you visit Bremen and don't take a selfie with this statue you probably get fined.

Bremerhaven



Bremerhaven, the biggest city on Germany's North Sea coast, is situated where the Weser river empties into the North Sea.

Attractions here include the Atlanticum seawater aquarium, the Gera trawler, a seafood cooking studio and a restaurant.

Suggestions

Deutsches Auswandererhaus; Tells the story of emigration and immigration in Germany using models and vignettes of individual stories in different eras.

German Maritime Museum; Small German maritime museum with the option to walk around the large battle ships and a U Boat. Only downside, no international language. So everything is in German. They are definitely missing a trick here.

Viewing Platform SAIL City; You have a nice view over the city there. You also can go to the (mostly very windy) top deck (95m over ground). The cost is €3pp adult and €2pp under 12years.

The town of Breman is 40 mins away.

Hamburg



Hamburg is a major port city in northern Germany and is connected to the North Sea by the Elbe River. It's crossed by hundreds of canals, and also contains large areas of parkland. Its central Jungfernstieg Boulevard connects the Altstadt (old town) and the Neustadt, passing Binnenalster lake, dotted with boats and surrounded by cafes and restaurants. Oysters and traditional Aalsuppe (soup) are local specialties.

There are two berth terminals; Altona and Hafen City.

Hafen City is closer to the city centre, but both are walkable to the town centre if that is what you are looking for.

Suggestions

It has a HOHO Bus service; You can either just purchase the bus ticket or for a little extra you can upgrade to include an hour long river cruise tour.

The St. Michaels Church boasts a 132 metre Tower and a viewing platform at 82 metres.

Next to the church you will find the Krameramtstuben which is just about the oldest buildings left after WW2. If you don't fancy walking, there are loads of regular water bus services whizzing around.

Binnenalster Lake which boasts on its south bank the most famous of Germany's shopping streets Jungfernstieg.

Miniatuur Wunderland; Minature Wunderland is absolutely stunning. For \$13 per person, the ticket is definitely worth the purchase. Although a little crowded, it is still worth it. It is amazing to see how much detail they have put into all the little architectures.

Cruise Destinations

River Elbe (Cruising)

The Elbe is one of the major rivers of Central Europe. It rises in the Krkonoše Mountains of the northern Czech Republic before traversing much of Bohemia, then Germany and flowing into the North Sea at Cuxhaven, 110 km northwest of Hamburg, this beautiful waterway winds its way through tall hills, past vast plains and alongside pretty towns and cities.

Weser River (Cruising)

The Weser is a river in Northwestern Germany. Formed at Hannoversch Münden by the confluence of the rivers Fulda and Werra, it flows through Lower Saxony. Together with the Werra tributary, which originates in Thuringia, it flows a total distance of 462 miles. It is accessible from the North Sea via Bremerhaven and provides a navigable path to the German city of Bremen.

HOLLAND

Amsterdam



Amsterdam is the Netherlands' capital, known for its artistic heritage, elaborate canal system and narrow houses with gabled facades, legacies of the city's 17th-century Golden Age. Its Museum District houses the Van Gogh Museum, works by Rembrandt and Vermeer at the Rijksmuseum, and modern art at the Stedelijk.

There are a number of ports you can dock in Amsterdam. IJmuiden is the furthest away, before the locks and will take anything from 1 hour to 1 1/2 hours depending on traffic.

There should be a shuttle laid on. However, the Dutch have built a terminal about 20 - 30 minutes' walk from the Central railway station, depending on your speed.

If you are in the cruise terminal closer to the city then on leaving the terminal there are tourist information guides to assist you with maps, purchasing tickets for canal, trams, museums etc, and any other queries you have. However, this is not the only terminal and some are a fair distance away and require a shuttle.

Not only can you see the station to your right when you leave the terminal, to your left is the tram terminal which goes right to the station, then up to Dam Square.

The walk into the city is easy, about 30 mins. It is mainly one straight road. So, out of the cruise terminal, turn right and follow the road, you will see the station in front of you. Just before you reach the station there will be a road junction to your left going under a railway bridge, cross over and go under the bridge, cross back over to the right hand side and follow the road up to the left and slightly right. The station will be on your right with everything in front of it. HOHO Buses, Canal Tours etc.

There is a variety of things to do whilst in Amsterdam:

Suggestions

The Canal cruises: (inc. a hop on and hop of boat) can be boarded near the station. It's a great way to see this relatively small city.

The Flower Market: On Singel between Muntplein and Koningsplein is the Bloemenmarkt, open 9.30am - 5pm it is the world's only floating flower market.

Anna Frank House: There is a boat stop there or you can walk, if you are fit. Do Anna Frank as early as possible as tourists queue to gain entrance for half an hour (occasionally more). However, if this is on your must do and to guarantee entrance it may be better to do an organised excursion.

Cruise Destinations

Diamond Tour: Gassan Diamonds, Nieuwe Uilenburgerstadt 173 - 175, have free tours daily between 9am & 5pm featuring a commentary explaining where diamonds are found and how rough diamonds are transformed into dazzlers.

Architecture: 20 -30 Roemer Visscherstraat is a row of houses built in 1894 in the architectural styles of seven different countries ~ a Gothic German home, a Renaissance Dutch house, an English cottage, a French Chateau, an Italian Palazzo, a Spanish Villa & a Russian Cathedral. 7 Singel has the world's narrowest house, the frontage is just 1 metre wide although it opens out as goes back

Ferry Ride: Short rides on the IJ river directly behind Central Station, every few minutes daily.

Vondelpark: has play areas for children, cafes for adults and a large Picasso sculpture hunt, also free live entertainment in the summer.

City Farm: For children the Kinderboerderij De Pip is a city farm located at Lizzy Ansinghstraat 82, open Monday to Friday 11am - 5pm & Sat/Sun 1 - 5pm

Rotterdam



Ships nearly always get a fireboat welcome so try and be up on deck as you arrive - backwards if you are on a large ship and the Shanty Choir are usually there on arrival or departure - Brilliant entertainment.

Suggestions

It is only a short walk anywhere and so much to do, river cruise, Botanic gardens, Delft (the town and the pottery), SS Rotterdam, fabulous coffee and cakes in the De Bijenkorf department store, the Maritime Museum, walk across the Erasmus Bridge .. or shop!!!! If you are in for a relaxed time, then it is the most amazing port for just sitting, glass of something in hand, watching the crazy amounts of river traffic going up and down. In fact ... just an amazing port.

Walk across the bridge and take the Spido boats for a tour of the largest container port in Europe and the Maritime museum has a mock-up of the control centre so you can see how it all works. Very interesting.

See the old SS Rotterdam which has been restored and turned into a hotel - they have a self-guided tour which is excellent - into the engine room, bridge, old indoor swimming pool

Then do not forget the Euromast - great views from the top,

If you want a good filling local meal then try the Erwtensoeep, a Dutch split pea soup with bacon etc, served with rye bread. Fabulous, cheap and filling.

You could also look at trying to get to Delft or Volendam.

It is possible to do a tour to Amsterdam from here. The P & O tour 'Amsterdam in a Nutshell' is good you get to see windmills, do a tour of city and a river cruise. Followed by a visit to a clog factory.

ATLANTIC SOUTHERN EUROPE COAST

FRANCE

Bordeaux



Bordeaux, hub of the famed wine-growing region, is a port city on the Garonne River in southwestern France.

The city is beautifully restored and has an ultra-modern public transport system. The "Port of the Moon" is also now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Stone Bridge, with its 17 arches, crosses the Garonne, offering pedestrians a lovely view over the docks and harbour. Take a stroll through old Bordeaux in the Triangle d'Or and stop at Place des Quinconces, France's largest Public Square. The city of

Bordeaux is an ideal base for exploring the greater wine region's unforgettable sights and tastes.

Bordeaux is a nice town to explore. Places of interest are: The Miroir D'eau, the flea market in La Place des Quinconces and the Botanical gardens.

Depending on the ship you could be in port or berthed at La Verdon which is about 1 ½ hours from Bordeaux. If in La Verdon, sometimes there is a shuttle to Soulac, a nearby seaside resort.

Suggestions

Place de la Bourse (Place Royale); Opposite the river bank - wide open space with old buildings of honey coloured stone in a horseshoe shape. Fountain of the three queens as the Graces in the centre. Worth taking the yellow bus tour for info on this and other landmarks.

St. Andre Cathedral; This is a absolute must visit! Blessed by the Pope Urban II in 1096 it is absolutely stunning. your mouth will drop the moment you walk in the main doors. The bell tower beside the cathedral is equally as impressive.

Parc de Majolan; This is a great place to unwind! The park is beautifully landscaped with lots of unusual features and it's all very well maintained.

Soulac is about 20 mins away and although fairly modern is quite a charming little seaside resort. The main shopping street is about a quarter to half mile long leading from the main square where the shuttle drops you right to the sea front which has a magnificent beach and a pleasant promenade.

Boulogne-sur-Mer



Boulogne-sur-Mer is a city, known as a major fishing port, on the north coast of France. A city of Art and History, but also a sea town, Boulogne-sur-Mer is composed of two very different parts. Its upper town is formed by ramparts protecting, among others, a castle museum, basilica and belfry. The lower city is marked by the presence of fishing, goods and sailing ports.

Suggestions

Nausicaa National Sea Centre; an amazing place to spend a few hours in. Whether you're visiting with friends or family then you will definitely be entertained for a while here. It is well laid out with displays in English as well as French. Lots to interact with and a good range of large and small tanks.

Cruise Destinations

Promenade des Remparts; The ramparts round the Old Town are more or less intact, although in some parts renovation work is underway, restricting access. It makes a nice afternoon stroll, with good views of Boulogne all the way around and then an easy walk back down to the main town. For foodies and those wanting bars the area in the Ramparts has plenty to offer.

La Crypte de Notre Dame; This crypt is very large with many underground rooms with fresco's and long corridors with information plaques in French and English. Plenty of artefacts and historical items on display. Truly is a place to visit if in boulogne sur mer. €5pp entrance fee.

Brest



Brest is a port city in Brittany, in northwestern France, bisected by the Penfeld River. It's known for its rich maritime history and naval base.

Brest itself is not one of the most inspiring places in France, it was badly bombed in the war & had to be rebuilt. However it does have a few places of interest.

Suggestions

Botanical Garden; Pleasant landscaped gardens near the marina area of Brest. There is a pleasant restaurant and a lake. This is a diamond in the rough. It is a little bit difficult to find but once there you feel like you are miles from civilization. The place is absolutely stunning.

Oceanographic Museum; This attraction is excellent for children and adults alike and most particularly on a wet day. It houses massive aquariums for different species of marine life found in Tropical, Temperate and Polar Zones.

Tanguy Tower; Beautiful place with and amazing view to the port.

Brest Castle and Maritime Museum; Once owned by Richard II of England, the castle is the city's foremost landmark and oldest monument. The structure boasts more than 1,700 years of history and still serves as a military fortress today. The Navy Museum inside is certainly not to be missed. A well preserved Chateau dating back to Roman times. Great place if you are a history buff.

The area surrounding Brest offers dramatic and windswept cliffs and beaches.

If you like older French towns with character, you could get a train to Quimper which has far more Breton charm.

Cherbourg



Cherbourg, in Normandy, is a port town with a seafaring history that is second to none.

One of the first places that the Titanic visited on its fateful journey and quickly liberated from the Nazis after the Normandy Landings, Cherbourg has a rich and often tragic past.

A short shuttle ride and you are dropped on the Quayside in Cherbourg, near the Information Centre. The office staff

Cruise Destinations

are friendly and speak good English. They will provide you with various maps and information on buses. It is worth knowing that on Monday's most shops are closed.

Suggestions

Take a walk around the town, through the Botanic Gardens and into the Church.

Chateau des Ravalet; A lovely place to visit, quiet and peaceful. The grounds are amazing, not too far from the main town

La Cite de la Mer; Really interesting museums consisting of three sections being the submarine, aquarium and Titanic museum. , It has attractions to suit all ages. You need to spend about 3-4 hours here to appreciate all it has to offer. €18pp (2016) seems steep, but worth it.

Liberation Museum this is a long walk up a long hill but it is worth a visit. However the only quibble visitors have is that if your French is limited it is difficult to read some of the display signage, although some have English descriptions. There are a lot of very interesting artefacts and displays and well worth going up to see.

Excursions

The P&O - D-Day Landing Beaches tour is recommended. You stop at St Mere Eglise (with memorial to John Steele - the paratrooper that landed on the church roof). Fare includes admission to the Airbourne Museum which is really well done. After this, you are taken to Utah Beach plus the Azeville Gun Battery (entry included) where you pick up an audio guide and tour the facility. People have said that this is one of the better P&O Tours they have done and a lot was packed into the time on the tour.

Dunkirk



Dunkirk is a coastal city in northern France. It is the third port of France, the first French seaport of the North Sea, Dunkerque is a land of welcome, a tourist destination with unusual beauty.

At the heart of a remarkable dune area, the sandy beaches stretch as far as the eye can see for miles, surrounded by 600 hectares of beautifully preserved dunes where flora and fauna thrive freely.

Suggestions

The Dunkirk 1940 Museum documents Operation Dynamo, the WWII evacuation of Allied soldiers from the city's beaches.

Commonwealth War Graves; Anyone who is in the area really must take a few hours out of their holiday to visit this beautiful memorial to the brave who didn't make it home. It is kept in impeccable condition by the French.

The waterside *Musée Portuaire* (Port Museum) has historic ships, including the *Duchesse Anne*, a 3-masted sailing ship built in 1901.

The striking *LAAC* is a contemporary art museum with a sculpture garden. Resorts line the soft sands of *Malo-les-Bains* beach.

The *Fine Art Museum* houses painting collections of the Flemish, French, Dutch and Italian schools.

Besides this port heritage, Dunkirk has two belfries that are UNESCO World Heritage Sites: on *Saint-Éloi* church and the town hall.

Cruise Destinations

As well as these many places of interest, relaxing is also on the agenda - on the beautiful fine sand beach of Malo-les-Bains, nicknamed the "queen of the northern beaches".

Honfleur



Honfleur is a city in northern France's Lower Normandy region, sited on the estuary where the Seine River meets the English Channel.

It was popular with Impressionist painters like Monet and Boudin. They found its changing light and picturesque quays inspiring—and even today, if you return to the same spot every day to take a photo, you'll find no two are the same.

This is a very pretty but quirky French town with a picturesque harbour and lots of interesting shops and just 24 km southeast of Le Havre. Lots of character with the many restaurants and shops selling local produce and ideal if you just want to enjoy a low-key day spent shopping in antique stores and boutiques then eat a great French lunch and just relax taking in the scenery. It is quite hard walking around because of the cobbled streets and uneven surfaces.

On Saturday, visit the town's lively market and stock up on local cheese.

Suggestions

Honfleur Tourist Train; Take a ride on the tourist train and discover the charming harbour town of Honfleur, from the town centre to the Côte de Grâce coast. The train will take you past Honfleur's famous Old Harbour, a genuine picture postcard image. Tour lasts 50 minutes. €6.50pp. The first one out use to be 10:30am.

Le Vieux Bassin; the picturesque harbour. Lots of sailboats dotting the little enclosed harbour. The harbour is literally surrounded by cafes and restaurants all very busy on a sunny Sunday afternoon. The streets beyond the harbour are worth wandering too. Art galleries and antique stores are very welcoming.

Saint Catherine's Church; This is a very quaint church located not far from the harbour in Honfleur. The church is quite small but beautiful.

Le Jardin des Personalites; Between the Harbour and the beach, this is a lovely quiet place to wander round. Lovely peaceful place with the famous people statues tucked away in their own spaces.

La Rochelle



Known as La Ville Blanche (the White City), La Rochelle's luminous limestone façades glow in the bright coastal sunlight. One of France's foremost seaports from the 14th to 17th centuries, the city has arcaded walkways, half-timbered houses (protected from the salt air by slate tiles), ghoulish gargoyles and a fabulous collection of lighthouses - all rich reminders of its magnificent seafaring heritage.

Cruise lines do not make more use of this lovely port.

The 14th century twin towers of St Nicolas Fort and the Tour de la Chaine (named after the chain once drawn across the harbour to keep out night intruders) ensure a dramatic entrance into the French Atlantic cruise port La Rochelle-Pallice.

Cruise Destinations

The medieval city offers an intriguing mix of well preserved and restored historic buildings and marketplaces within a lively modern city full of bars and restaurants and with an excellent aquarium. Tickle your taste buds with a visit to the small town of Cognac and its famous Courvoisier, Hennessy and Martell cellars. Along the way, you will pass through ancient towns like Saintes with Romanesque churches, arches and arenas.

The cruise port for this fine place is 20-30 mins ride away. The shuttles are bendy busses, limited seating and lots standing so not the best trip into town.

The shuttle will drop you right by the tourist information. Close to the Aquarium and the main town. There are also public toilets here.

Suggestions

There's lovely craft stands on the walk into town which is a 5/10 min stroll.

The three towers should be visited when in La Rochelle and they give you a little insight into the explorations of the French with their settlements in Canada and The Southern United States. The views are great from all towers. St Nicolas being the best and feels more like a castle than a tower. It is big and has rooms to visit and interesting spiral staircases. The Lantern tower is lovely and the tallest and the views from the uppermost staircase are spectacular, but a steep climb and not for the faint hearted! The Chains is smaller but gives the history of the French explorers. Good value €8.50 for the 3 towers but not at €6.00 per tower (2014) and leaflets in English are available.

The Aquarium; The first thing that strikes you about the La Rochelle aquarium is the eye watering price, Adult €15pp, Child €11.50, (2014) however the brilliance of the exhibition makes it seem very good value for money. There are some truly breath-taking sea creatures in huge and beautiful tanks. The staff are exceedingly helpful and pleasant, the facilities feel clean and new, and the jungle at the end of the visit is an exciting bonus. If this is on your to do list, get an early, if not the first shuttle into town. When we visited the queue at 10:30am was very long.

Download a copy of the Tourist Booklet and follow one of the walking routes outlined on p16 of the map <http://en.calameo.com/read/00001686577ea37e8b621> The route takes you down some very scenic roads and also passes by The Market (Place du Marche) - worth popping in to see all the local produce, fish, cheese, meats, fruit and vegetables.

There's no doubt, the Vieux Port at La Rochelle is just lovely in spite of the excess of touristy restaurants and souvenir stands and it does get over run with tourists in the summer months. The old port is a great place to wander; there is a huge history to discover. If you get tired, there are lots of restaurants all around the harbour and town area for you to just sit have a glass of wine and/or something to eat. You will not go hungry.

However, the actual harbour with its bars, restaurants and shops has more than enough to offer a first timer without looking to go further afield and then missing out on La Rochelle itself.

Not sure if a doable DIY on a day visit, but I'lle de Re, across the water from La Rochelle is a lovely island with lots of little coves and small harbours.

Le Havre



Le Havre, is one of the largest ports in France, only second to Marseille and is normally used as a gateway to other destinations like Paris.

It is a major port in northern France's Upper Normandy region, where the Seine River meets the English Channel.

If you don't want to travel afar you will be surprised with just how much Le Havre has to offer.

Le Havre is dubbed the birthplace of Impressionist style of painting and is home to the Malraux Museum which boasts the largest collection of Impressionist painting in France, outside of Paris.

The city of Le Havre is approximately 25 minute walk from where the ships dock and most cruise lines usually offer a shuttle service into the centre of town. Taxis have a fixed rate of €8 for up to 4 people and €10 for up to 6 people one way to the centre of town.

In the cruise terminal there are a few tables where you purchase a shuttle ticket for €4, which is actually a local transport day ticket. There is also a tourist info kiosk centre for disembarking passengers which provides practical information with free travel guides, a small shop, plus taxi and tour services.

The shuttle buses have a circular route, starting from the ship they go to the city centre and then return via a large shopping centre in the port to drop off and pick up shoppers, then back to ship. One thing to mention is they are very sympathetic to wheelchair users, often pre-loading them. La Havre itself is an easy walking city and tourist attractions such as museums, galleries and cultural buildings are well mapped.

Stores are generally open Monday through Saturday 9- 7, but many close for lunchtime usually between 12-3. During July and August shops stay open for longer and even on Sundays. Museums open 10-5, but most are closed on Monday or Tuesday.

Suggestions

Walking along past the marina there is a beach along with a children's park, Skateboard Park and outdoor swimming pool. The beach area has a nice promenade with plenty of eateries, a small marina area and it is quite a sight when a large container ship leaves the harbour and passes only a few hundred metres from the beach.

If you happen to be visiting Le Havre in the summer you might want to visit the mile long beach where water sports enthusiasts can sail, windsurf or canoe. Ninety-six parks are spread throughout the city, including the Saint-Roch gardens, nearly five acres of British-style gardens in central Le Havre. The Le Havre tourism office provides itineraries for walking tours of Le Havre, which highlight attractions throughout the city.

If you like art then try "The Musee Malraux a great stop off! It is a shortish walk from the ship, and if it is the first Saturday in the month, entry is free. Lots of Impressionist work and many brilliant works by other artists that were an eye opener. Yes it's small, but large enough to tour and not be overloaded with artworks.

There is the church designed by Perret (so-called Father of reinforced concrete!) the Church of St Joseph. It should be your number one stop; it looks drab from the outside, but once inside, WOW! The dark interior is lit by myriad stained glass windows - really amazing. The tower was designed to take the form of a lantern and the mosaic windows contain over 12,700 pieces of coloured glass.

Then try a walk to the garden in front of the Hotel de Ville - in spring and summer these are beautiful and the spectacular fountains are everywhere.

Cruise Destinations

Want something different? Take the Funicular which is some 500 yards behind and to the right of the Mairie, at the top, turn right for a short walk to the panoramic view point. The Funicular is very cheap. Don't worry about the ticket machines, you can pay in cash as you board.

There's a lovely coastline North of Le Havre around Etretat, where the Impressionists painted and there's also the beaches used in the Normandy landings which would involve a longer day. It is amazing to go there though and you will find yourself getting very emotional if you go.

If up for the trip then try a taxi to Honfleur. Cost was €125 (2015) for a round journey, so the more of you the better. The ships price was £47pp so going by taxi was a better deal. The journey takes 25 mins or so and the drive takes you over The Normandy Bridge.

One cruiser who took this option reported: Their driver drove through Honfleur and took us to a lovely church on the hillside called La Chapelle Notre Dame de grace which had these amazing bells outside which chime on the hour etc. He then drove further up the hillside stopped and gave us a fantastic panoramic view over Honfleur The Seine and The Normandy bridge. Well worth a look if you go that way. He then drove us back to the harbour where we arranged to meet him in two and half hours. It was market day so a little busy with locals but we spent our time drinking coffee strolling around this delightful little harbour and ended outside the Cafe de Paris eating and having a beer in the sunshine. He then returned us to Le Havre.

You can catch a bus from the Le Havre train station to Honfleur - the first bus leaves 9:19 am but it will be best to check the bus schedule carefully as they don't run frequently. Buses don't operate on Sunday's, so you will need to take a taxi instead.

Paris is an option from this port.

Paris



Although cruise lines advertise Le Havre port as the gateway into Paris - the city is over 2 hours away and can even take up to 3 hours depending on the traffic. To see the best of Paris you will need more than one day and the time it takes to get there and coming back and the cost involved it really isn't worth it. However, if you are adamant to see Paris it is suggested you use the cruise line shore excursions as the traffic can be horrendous at the best of times so you will have the security that the ship will wait for you, if you are delayed.

If you wish to do Paris by yourself then there are hourly trains available, which will take you into Paris St Lazare. If tickets are purchased in advance from SNCF: Voyage, Transports et Logistique they will cost £30 one way for a journey that lasts 2 hours.

Le Verdon



Le Verdon-sur-Mer is a small coastal resort at the northernmost end of the Medoc peninsula, close to Soulac-sur-Mer and north of Bordeaux in south-west France. A small resort town with basic facilities, it faces across the Gironde estuary to the town of Royan (Poitou-Charentes).

The ship will berth about 2 miles from the village.

Suggestions

This is a difficult port for the DIY cruisers; there are no buses, trains or taxis. So, you opt for a cruise excursion, take the ferry to Royan or spend some time on board.

Verdon to Bordeaux is about 65 miles.

Rouen



Rouen, capital of the northern French region of Normandy, is a port city on the river Seine.

Rouen was for a long time France's second city, after Paris, which explains the richness of the town's artistic heritage. Today, it deserves a visit for its monuments, Gothic art being particularly well represented, but also for the charm of its alleyways and the many half-timbered houses there are.

The town is situated on the right bank of the River Seine, but today, includes the left bank (the Saint-Sever area in particular, on the south of the river), and the Île Lacroix.

Vieux Rouen; Lovely place to see. Every street is filled with charming old buildings, very beautiful area.

Suggestions

Cathedrale Notre-Dame de Rouen; from the minute you walk through the streets and get your first view you realise that the place is very special, it's stunning. The external architecture is so detailed and wherever you look there is something different that teases the eye. It's a credit that they do not demand a charge for entry but one is able to voluntarily contribute. The inside is as breath taking as the outside.

Musee des Beaux-Arts; A large, old museum with a large collection, the Musee boasts a very good Impressionist collection.

Place du Vieux-Marche; Great way to spend the day or evening, lots of restaurants and bars to sit and people watch.

Rue du Gros-Horloge; Situated in a shopping street, this clock is amazing from both sides, each of which are worth a photo. Read up on the history. It is one of the oldest working clocks in the world, and thus no minute hand.

St Nazaire



Saint-Nazaire, a town in the South of Brittany, draws profit from its unique situation on the estuary of the Loire River and the French Atlantic coast. In Saint-Nazaire, tourism combines both a very pleasant environment and outstanding attractions. Welcome to a city by the sea!

Saint-Nazaire is ideal for walks and strolls, on the seaside, around the harbour or on the green outskirts.

The port has always been at the heart of Saint-Nazaire's history, it is very *raison d'être*. Today there is nothing left of the transatlantic services which regularly linked Saint-Nazaire to Cuba, Mexico and Panama... When the German submarine base was built, between 1940 and 1942, taking the place of the former transatlantic terminal, the whole harbour site was dramatically changed. In recent years, this huge fortification has been the object of town-planning project "Ville-Port" and integrated into the city's landscape for more peaceful use. Around the submarine pens, around the docks and harbour basin, Saint-Nazaire has both reconciled itself with its port and created an authentic and original tourist offer.

How to get around: link to interactive Map: http://geo.mairie-saintnazaire.fr/plan_pdvi/index.html

Suggestions

The Ocean Liner Experience; On the very spot where ocean liners used to moor alongside Saint-Nazaire's quays, inside the former submarine base, Escal'Atlantic offers you a unique experience and the discovery of the world of legendary liners.

The Heritage Museum; The Ecomusée, located on the outside of the harbour, directly facing the Loire estuary, is a museum about the historic, industrial and maritime heritage of Saint-Nazaire and its surrounding area.

Submarine l'Espadon; This museum is very good with interesting exhibits and a first rate audio guide in English, telling you not only about the submarine, but also about things like how sonar can be used to tell you what is around you. The submarine is not good for people with limited mobility or claustrophobia, but is a great place for children.

The local STRAN busses make it easy to get about town. During the summer, look out for the bus number U3, it takes you to some of Saint-Nazaire's finest beaches.

PORTUGAL

Lisbon



Lisbon is Portugal's hilly, coastal capital city.

Some of the best views of the Portuguese capital come as your ship cruises along the Tagus River. You pass the Belem Tower and the impressive Monument to the Discoveries with its statue of Henry the Navigator before arriving at the Lisbon cruise terminal.

Although small for a European capital, this city does sprawl a little so you would do best to concentrate on three districts -

Baixa, Bairro Alto and Alfama, each with its own distinctive style, making Lisbon cruises a must see.

Baixa has busy streets of inviting shops, cafés and restaurants while Alfama is the atmospheric old town with narrow cobblestone streets, medieval and Moorish-style buildings, wrought-iron balconies with trailing flowers and a mix of small shops and bars. Bairro Alto is another historic district with narrow streets and is a steep climb from Baixa so look out for the 100-year-old lift (Elevador do Carmo) near Rossio Square. With such a variety of destinations to explore, cruises to Lisbon bring to your holiday a balance of both modern and historical grounds.

Get up early and get out on deck for the sail under the bridge. It is always a lovely arrival up the River Tagus past the Belem Tower, the Monument of the Discoveries and under the 25 April Bridge.

Officially there are over 5 docking areas for cruise ships in Lisbon: Santa Apolonia, Santa Apolonia Jusante, Jardim do Tabaco, Alcântara and da Rocha. The first three are all within the same area which we will further refer to as Santa Apolonia this is close to Black Horse Square and anywhere between 15 - 30 mins walk to town. The latter two are located close to the famous bridge: Ponte 25 de Abril and about 45min + walk to town. Shuttles to town take about 20 mins, Adult £4pp Child £2pp single. It drops you off at Restauradores Square, obelisk in centre.

If you have accessibility issues then the terminal closer to the city, is very user friendly for wheelchairs. They also laid on accessibility shuttles for those in need of them.

This is another easy DIY Destination. There are three shuttle drop off points that are known. One is Black Horse Square, one is Placa de Restauradores and the other is Figuera Square. If you are dropped off in Black Horse Square cross to the other side where the local tourist office is housed and you can collect a map of the city.

The city itself is well spread out and full of great architecture and it is very easy to find your way around.

Suggestions

There are lots of HOHO trips around the city; most of them go from the top corner of Black Horse Square, however there are other pick-up/drop-off points around the city. Have a look around where the shuttle drops you off for an information and ticket point.

Route One is the 'Tagus Tour', (Red tour) this takes in all the main sights, including the Discovery monument on the river bank before dropping you back at the square, you can get on and off at leisure and just pick up the next tour bus, every 30 minutes.

Route two - Castle line, (Green tour) takes in the city centre and up to the Castle with it's wonderful views and plenty of quaint streets cafes, bars and restaurants.

Cruise Destinations

There is also the olde tram, don't book the cruise lines tour you can easy DIY, it is an old wooden yellow tram and it is HOHO.

Try getting a taxi up to Parque Eduardo VII (Edward 7th Park), for the absolutely stunning views. It should only cost about €8, and it is well worth it. Make sure you get him to go to the very top. From there you can basically walk almost in a straight line back down to the Praca do Comercio. The first bit is park (on the right about half way down behind the trees there is a kids playground), then you are walking down a main street which is premium/designer brands e.g. Gucci (apparently one of the most expensive streets in Europe per square foot!). There's a Hard Rock café there too. Then as you get further down you are in more of the little squares, branded shops, local shops etc.

A must see is the 'Elevator de Santa Justa' the trip to the top is worthwhile with fantastic views over the city. You could also try a visit to St George's Castle, a short but steep climb to the ticket office and then spend a lovely couple of hours or so wandering round the castle site. The views from the top are spectacular!

You could try a Tuk Tuk's these are good fun. The smaller ones charge about €30 for 4 people and there is one which carried 6 people that is €60, per Tuk Tuk not per person. (2016) The trips lasts 90 minutes. The drivers are very knowledgeable and friendly you stop a few times at some main points for you to get out and have a mini tour of these places and also for you to take pictures. They can also go down roads that coaches are not allowed down. You will find them near where the coach drops you and around Black horse Square.

If dining, then a Portuguese custard tart is a must and totally delicious. Cost around €1 each.

For Esteril, if you dock fairly central to the town the walk to the station Cais Do Sodre is around 25 minutes flat walking. The trains just go from the Station to Cascais with Estoril situated just before Cascais. It cost is €4.60pp return or €1,70pp over 60's (2017 prices) to Cascais. The journey is approx. 25 minutes with a view of the coast line most of the way.

If you want the beach then this is about 2 minutes' walk from the station. The sandy beach is normally packed with holidaymakers, but remember the sea is the Atlantic Ocean, so could be a little chilly.

If you are in the berth at the top of the city and you want to visit the Oceanarium then take the No.728 bus from immediately outside the port. It will cost €1.85pp for a single It is €18 for both the permanent & temporary exhibitions (€15 for just the permanent). Each journey took about 20 mins.

Excursions

Try P&O excursion which was called Land and Sea or something similar. It is approx. 1.5 hour coach tour around Lisbon, then onto a luxury riverboat where you have an afternoon tea type meal. It is good value for money and it allows you to get your bearings around what is a huge city. There is so much to see from the river.

Porto



Porto is a coastal city in northwest Portugal known for its stately bridges and port wine production.

Oporto is a lovely city to visit with a central old part but also sporting stunning beaches on the Atlantic coast. It is a very interesting place, but the town is far from the port.

It has a beautiful cruise terminal, a little walk from ship to terminal with escalator and a lift.

They shuttle you to the centre. Where the bus drops you off is the stop for a little train that goes round Porto.

Cruise Destinations

Oporto is a bit hilly and steep in places. There is a bit of a walk to the riverside from the coach drop off,

Suggestions

Get the shuttle into town then walk down to the river through the shops and take the boat trip to see the 6 bridges. €13pp (2016). Cheaper than P&O. They also do one that takes in Port tasting at a cellar.

There is an open top hop and off bus. Amazing town lots to see, the railway station is not to be missed. Included in the ticket price is a boat ride on the Douro.

As well as open top bus there is a trolley train €10 and if you walk across from the shuttle bus and down the hill under the clock tower there are tuktuks which are for 3/4 person and you get a guided tour. The guides English is limited but they take you to all key sites and will stop at your request for photos. €40 for about an hour for 3 persons.

It is well worth the journey to take a trip on one of the little trains around the cobblestones. It goes around the town with commentary in English, then over the river to the port cellars, where most if not all of the passengers get off for a tour of a port cellar. You can even try a river cruise down the Douro. The river frontage is pretty and lined with bars and cafes

Rio Douro; There are plenty of options to take a trip on the Douro - ranging from day long lunch and port-tasting ones to the simpler Six Bridges one, 50 minutes at €12.50pp (2016). Be aware that sitting outside on a breezy day and sailing against the tide can lead to some seats getting sprayed with water.

For a DIY then try 'Tours for You', they have a 3 hour tour for about €18pp. You are taken around all the places that need to be seen, lots of photo stops and good knowledge from the tour guide.

McDonald's Imperial; Be sure to visit McDonalds on the main square. A recommendation to go to McDonalds but a McDonalds with a difference, you will not have have seen anything like it before.
<http://www.localporto.com/mcdonalds-imperial-porto-restaurant/>

Clerigos Tower; The church is beautiful, and by paying only €3 you can go through the museum and climb the tower. The views at the top are breath-taking. There are 400 or so steps to the top and the staircase is narrow.

For you football lovers then your excursion to Porto FC is very easy to do independently and much much cheaper. You can take the metro from Matosinhos (port) and finish at Estadio de Dragao (football stadium) it is direct and will take approx. 45 minutes and cost €2.50pp per way so €5 return. It will drop you directly at the stadium and you can purchase stadium and museum tours for €15pp so total of €20pp or approx. £16pp. After your tour you can then go shopping in the mall opposite as metro runs every 15 minutes and stadiums tours every hour. Very easy to do. Hope this helps. It is £45pp for the organised excursion

Excursions

P&O trip Douro River & Wine Tasting, It is a lovely drive into the town followed by a river trip then a visit to the Ferreira port lodge where you have a tour and some tasting. Highly recommend it. £50pp (2017)

Beach

There's a very nice beach (if it's warm enough!) just outside the dock gates. There are bars and restaurants in the area as well.

Portimao



Portimão is a town and a municipality in the district of Faro, in the Algarve region of southern Portugal. It is the 2nd largest city in Portugal's Algarve area and it is spread out and quite hilly.

Portimao is a typical Portuguese small town with grand churches, big squares with modern fountains and the ubiquitous black and white marble set paving. The port area is a bit run down and you are bussed into the main town. There are lots of seating areas, small parks and fountains

and fabulous sandy beaches close by. There is a nice seafront promenade with stalls selling boat trips etc.

The plan for the city is to promote the tourist attractions so maybe the cruise ships will start calling more often.

Normally a tender port, but it is possible to berth if you are on a small ship.

Suggestions

The city is famous for its sardines, so head to the Arade river area for lunch. There are lots of restaurants here all trying to get you to sample their fish. The fishing boats are tied up by the restaurants and there is a lovely cooling breeze.

Alvor Boardwalk; Lovely stroll if you don't want to walk along the sand. Lovely place to visit, wander around and look at the river and boats. Plenty of cafes.

If you want to go further afield then look for tours to Sagres and Lagos.

Add Praia da Rocha to this port.

Praia da Rocha



Praia da Rocha is the beach and built up area on the Atlantic Ocean which is the southern section of the municipality/concelho of Portimão, Algarve.

A jewel of a resort on Portugal's Algarve, Praia da Rocha is famous for the glorious beach which stretches along its restaurant and café-lined waterfront.

Praia da Rocha is the main beach in Portimão but it is also a bustling holiday resort in its own right. This is a great port

of call for a `chill-out' day spent simply browsing the shops and enjoying golden sands and sapphire-blue waters. The beach itself is vast, even in the middle of summer there is always plenty of space. But, if you are feeling active, there is also the 17th century Fortress of Santa Catarina to explore at one end of the beach. At the other end is a tunnel which connects the main beach to a chain of smaller, uncrowded ones, overlooked by rugged cliffs and full of dramatic rock formations.

The western end of Tomás Cabreira Avenue was vastly improved in 2006, with new paved and landscaped pedestrian areas with seating to relax and enjoy the sunshine! The avenue is full of restaurants, cafes, and shops and is particularly lively at night with a variety of bars, and clubs to choose from. Just inland is the Ria de Alvor estuary, a wilderness of salt flats and sand dunes which is home to dozens of bird species.

Cruise Destinations

Suggestions

There are all sorts of water sports available on Praia da Rocha, and a variety of boat trips are available from Portimão river front (along from the marina at the eastern end of the beach).

Spend about two hours walking from one end of the beach to the other. The beach is beautiful and rock formations make it very photogenic, be sure to take a camera with you. There is a boardwalk and harbour jetty to stretch your legs and enjoy the sea breeze. The area itself provides numerous restaurants to satisfy all taste buds.

Further Afield

Ponta da Piedade; you will need to find a boat tour for this. But, if you are traveling to Portugal, this is a must! The beautiful grottoes will take your breath away.

Cape Saint Vincent; this is the Western most point of the South part of Continental Portugal. Definitely worth a visit but a bit crowded. It is possible to walk around the cliffs from where the best picture of the lighthouse can be taken.

Fortaleza de Sagres; Prince Henry the Navigator had his navigation school located here. While minimalist in places, this is an interesting place to visit.

Also worth exploring is the charming Old Town of nearby Portimao, with its 18th and 19th century houses, elegant squares and winding streets.

Add Portimão to this port.

SPAIN

Aviles



Aviles is in the province of Asturias in the Asturias and Cantabria region of Spain. It is not far from Oviedo, the capital of Asturias. Aviles has a charming and well preserved medieval centre that is well worth visiting. Take your time to wander through its streets admiring the often brightly coloured architecture and stopping regularly to sample some excellent tapas.

However it is for the medieval historic centre that you will want to visit and you won't be disappointed. The old town is very colourful with pale sandstone buildings standing side by side with buildings rendered in pink, lemon, green, blue etc. Its narrow streets regularly open out into large sunny squares surrounded by arcaded buildings many of which are bars and restaurants and offer lovely spots to stop and people-watch. The pedestrian streets of Galiano and Rivero are particularly lovely.

Suggestions

Parque de Ferrera; Great place, on the edge of the centre of town, to wander around. There is a large pond, with a variety of birdlife. Very pleasant place to go for a stroll and escape the hustle and bustle of the town.

Plaza de Espana El Parche; Many of the town's main streets come together in this pleasant square. It is bordered by impressive, historical buildings, and is close to main shopping areas. Nice to stroll around.

Museo de la Historia; Small accessible museum, well presented and lit , giving the history of the town and its relationships to the development of Northern Spanish trade routes and emigration.

Cruise Destinations

Biarritz



Biarritz, an elegant seaside town on southwestern France's Basque coast, has been a popular resort since European royalty began visiting in the 1800s. It's also a major surfing destination, with long sandy beaches and surf schools.

Beauty and well-being are right at home in Biarritz which is ideally located by the sea at the foot of the Pyrenees.

The Grande Plage is the centre of the action. Behind it, visit the restored, Art Deco casino and wander the streets down

to the old port to the west.

Suggestions

Biarritz Lighthouse; Well worth the climb up the lighthouse, pick a clear day to get the best views. The lighthouse has restricted entry due to the crowds so go early or be prepared to wait.

Aquarium; Small-ish but very good quality aquarium. Spot-on exhibitions. The only disappointment; nothing was in English, not even the explanation / presentation of the large tank.

Planete Musee du Chocolat; A small place with lots of chocolate statues and moulds and an interesting history. The chocolate ticket and hot chocolate to finish are very good.

Maison Arosteguy; this shop has an amazing selection of teas with a friendly staff eager to help. Although prices may seem a bit high, the tea is so unusual that I think it is worth the price. They also have wine, cheese, and local condiments that make great gifts.

Bilbao



The Basque city and cruise port of Bilbao in northern Spain has become one of the hottest destinations in Europe following the opening of the imaginatively-designed Guggenheim modern art gallery, which is an architectural work of Avant Garde art in its own right.

Until then, Bilbao was very much a working city but it has always boasted a lively old town dating from the 14th century. Through the winding alleyways of the Casco Viejo you can stop to sample tapas at the many exceptional local

bars and restaurants.

Other sights include the arcaded Plaza Nueva and the Gothic Cathedral de Santiago. One of Spain's most important art collections is housed across the city at the Museo de Bellas Artes. This features works dating from the 12th century through to contemporary art by Cezanne, Gauguin and Francis Bacon.

The berth is at Getxo which is about 12 miles from Bilbao centre and requires a shuttle transfer of 20-30 mins depending on traffic.

Suggestions

Bilbao has a good mix of the old and the new. A DIY to the Guggenheim museum. Even if you not the arty type it is well worth a visit. The shuttle bus will drop you off the street below, it is then a 5 min walk. If you can then buy tickets in advance, sometimes people have not been able to purchase tickets on the day. At least check admission charges online prior to sailing as most Spanish museums/art galleries have special rates of children, OAPs and some days of the week are free entry. For the entrance to the Guggenheim look for the big dog covered in flowers. You can't miss it.

Cruise Destinations

Then a visit to the old city across the river. There is a bridge near the Guggenheim, come out of the museum, turning left and at the other side take the lift down to the river, walk along the river side. Seeing as you are down this way drop off at the Artxanda Funicular. Trains are normally every 15mins. This takes you up to the Artxanda view point for great Aerial photographs of the Guggenheim Museum and views over the city, the price is .90c pp single, (2016) and there are no returns tickets. On coming back down make your way along the river bank to the C18th part of town to the bridge by the old railway station and enter the old town, Casa Viejo with its small cobbled lanes and a nice square for tapas, bars and restaurants about 15 mins walk but worth it. That way you see some of the architectural history of the city which goes back centuries. Then a walk back down the main street to Parque de Doña Casilda, close to where the shuttle goes from, a stroll around and an ice cream.

Add Getxo before this port.

Cadiz



Cádiz is an ancient port city in southwest Spain, built on a strip of land surrounded by the sea in the Andalusia region.

The narrow streets of the old town below are lined by tall Moorish-style houses with flower-decked balconies mixed in amongst some small shops and tapas bars. Cadiz dates back to the 12th century BC so is the oldest continuously inhabited city in the western world but sultry Seville has long since outgrown its neighbour.

Cadiz is absolutely gorgeous, it is like a small peninsular with sea on both sides. Not only is it walkable, but once you get beyond the tourist office, it's a relatively shady and cool walk through narrow lanes, with plenty of places to stop off for tapas or a drink. It is a nice place to wonder about. The gardens are nice lots of topiary trees. In the centre is the cathedral & cafes/bars lots streets with shops.

You cruise right into the heart of historic Cadiz and immediately across the busy Avenida del Puerto from the Spanish port is the main square and shopping area. From there, it is easy to find your own way around this compact city.

The ships dock almost in the city, so no need for a shuttle bus.

Suggestions

The hop on/off tourist bus stops outside the port gates, it is really good and shows you many of the main sites. €18pp (2016)

Turn left out of the port, walk past the HOHO busses and carry on until you see the tourist office (hexagonal?) on your right, they are helpful and have various maps/leaflets including one for walking tours

If you get a map from the Tourist information you will find walking routes around the town marked in different colours. The roads and pathways are likewise marked so for instance if you fancy taking the "green route" you just follow the green lines painted on the roads/pathways. So simple but a brilliant idea.

To get to the newer part of the city you can either walk along the paseo maritimo, lovely beaches and beach cafe bars (chiringuitos), or take. Number 1 bus from next to the port and which goes into the main shopping area.

There is a nice park close to the front to wander round with lots to see and do. Turn right as you leave the port and follow the front. Visit the enormous Cathedral which has a circular vault below it. The acoustics in the vault create some very unusual sounds.

Cruise Destinations

Go up the Torre Tavira and see the Camera Obscura in operation. The guide operating will give you an insight into the town and you can learn more about the buildings. There are also great views from the top of the tower too.

Shopping is varied in Cadiz, with everything from designer clothes to unique Spanish handicrafts available. Columela and Ancha streets are perhaps the best places to start your souvenir shopping while the old town's Sunday flea market is ideal for collectors of unusual items. The old Town area has some semi pedestrianized shopping streets, and an interesting market building with a fascinating sea food section.

La Giralda (the bell-tower next to its Gothic cathedral), is in Seville's historic Jewish quarter which also has the whitewashed houses and exquisitely coloured bougainvillea that everyone associates with this lovely city.

There are plenty of beaches in and around Cadiz. La Cortadura Beach; this is the longest beach in Cadiz and a short walk from the harbour. There is also La Victoria Beach, La Caleta Beach and Santa María del Mar Beach. There is a lovely walk from where you dock, along the side of the sea and round to two different beach areas, one is very rocky and the other more sandy.

Try the 'Trail of 2 Cities' excursion, comprising a guided coach tour around Cadiz, followed by a walk around the parts inaccessible to motor vehicles of any size. Then onto Jerez de la Frontera, where the guide will show you some of the more important sites of Jerez before leaving you for an hour's 'free time'

Sometimes there is a walking tour offered as an excursion. This is about 2 hrs long with a drink included. But see 'maps' above.

Further Afield

Jerez, famous for its sherry, flamenco dancers and horses is 30km from Cadiz. Rather than spend a fortune on a ship excursion, you could take the train from the port station, trains are €8 return to the centre of Jerez, it takes about 40 mins. and the journey is most interesting. In Jerez a short walk gets you to the cathedral/alcazar area where €15 gets you a hop on hop off tour and free entry to the tour of the Gonzales Byass bodega. Trains are every half hour ish but the stations are good for working out times etc

There is an excursion to see the Andalusian horses at Jerez followed by a visit to see sherry making & of course the tasting. Cruisers who have done this excursion say it is worth it.

'Seville' is about a 90 minute by coach and about the same on the train, the train station is quite near the port, This should allow you plenty of time to explore this beautiful city. If offered on your ship the Seville DIY by coach leaves at 8:30 am and returns to the ship by 4:30p.m.

Seville is an option from this port.

Cruise Destinations

El Ferrol



The sail in is very picturesque and is the Spanish equivalent of a fjord. However, the town is quite small and completely Spanish, not at all a 'holiday' type place. It probably would not excite a lot of people.

Its claim to fame is that it is the birthplace of Franco.

Suggestions

Naval Museum: This museum is a must for everyone interested in naval history. A rich and very diverse collection, and their collection of ship models is a marvel! The beautiful library is furnished with old ship furniture. Staff is friendly and helpful.

Castle of San Felipe; Well-conditioned coast-artillery fortress. Very interesting tour for those who are interest in forts and castles! The entrance is free and there are almost no people inside. Except fortress itself this place provides a nice river and Ferrol Port views.

Parque Reina Sofia; this is a large park with gardens for a pleasant walk. In it you will find some beautiful peacocks and it has a very nice area to go where children and parents can relax. There is a cafe and restaurant where you eat well and very economical.

One of the excursions from here is to Santiago de Compostela and the trip from El Ferrol takes approx. 1 hour on very good roads. Once at the drop off point there is an 8 minute stroll to the central square where the magnificent Cathedral is situated. On the opposite side is the Town Hall, on another side is the Hostel dos Reis Catholicos now a Parador Hotel but which began life as a Royal Hospital founded by Isabel and Fernando in 1492.

Just outside the fish market is a great little caseta where you can indulge in a glass of wine and free serrano tapa.

Gijon



On the shores of the Cantabrian Sea, Gijón offers an attractive combination of maritime tradition, monumental heritage and modern urban planning right on the seashore. Its marina is a testament to its close links with the sea throughout its history.

Most of the streets are cobblestone, barely two cars wide and pave the way to many renovated buildings that display the colorful life of the village.

You could dock in the new harbour. This is still being constructed and is about 6km from Gijon itself. The shuttle will take 10 minutes to get to the centre. It is very green and quite pretty once you get out of the massive dock area.

It has great shops and the beach is gorgeous with bars on the sea front.

Suggestions

Laboral Ciudad de la Cultura; It is a nice place to go for a tour and get wonderful views of Gijon. There is a nice terrace to have something drink and kids can run free. The viewpoint has beautiful views and architecture is fantastic.

Cruise Destinations

Santa Catalina Headland; A nice walk up from the Old Town. The best bit is walking inside and hearing the sound of the sea eerily reflected from the sculpture itself.

Jardin Botanico Atlantico; The botanical gardens are a fantastic attraction only about 30 minutes from the city centre with lots to see and right next to the Laboral Ciudad de la Culture.

Museo del Ferrocarril; A small entrance fee gets you into this large display of mostly Spanish trains and railway equipment. The history is interesting the staff are enthusiastic and you even get a short ride in a train carriage.

Getxo



Getxo is bathed by the Cantabrian Sea, with a unique landscape flanked by beaches and cliffs that make it an exceptional destination.

If you decide to stay close to the ship then it offers the opportunity to stroll if you fancy staying in and around the port. It is a small old fisherman village with their names on every house. Keep walking until Neguri and you will find a lot of old and massive castle type houses facing the beach.

Suggestions

Getxo offers an extensive network of shops, renowned for their high quality and diversity. There are several clearly differentiated shopping districts within the town. Las Arenas - Romo, Neguri - Puerto Deportivo & Algorta - Andra Mari. Generally speaking, all the shopping establishments in Getxo are open from Monday to Saturday from 09:30 to 13:30 and from 17:00 to 20:00.

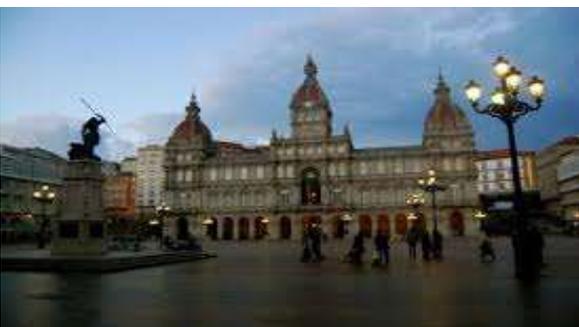
Puerto Viejo; This is the beach area you can see from your cruise ship. It is only a short walk away. Behind the beach the port itself offers small white cottages clustered together in steep streets where bars "of a bygone age" still exist.

Algorta Old Port; a little further on from the beach. This former fishing port today is a leisure and recreation area for visitors and local inhabitants alike.

Try a Taxi tour, very reasonably priced.

However, this is the main port for **Bilbao** and is located 20 kilometres from Bilbao city centre,

La Coruna



The name of Corunas cruise dock - Transatlantic Quay - reflects its location on the north-western tip of the Iberian Peninsula making it - you might be surprised to learn - the closest European port to New York.

It is a charming mixture of old town and new town also with a couple of beaches along the two-mile stretch of coastline it overlooks. The colonnaded Maria Pita Square is at the heart of the old town, with many shops, bars and restaurants all around. There are various fascinating museums including the interactive House of Mankind plus an aquarium and planetarium.

Corunna is also the main Atlantic gateway to one of the most ruggedly scenic regions in Spain - Galicia. Among its attractions is one of the world's great pilgrimage destinations: Santiago de Compostela, with its Romanesque cathedral.

Cruise Destinations

The port is very central, right between the old and new parts of town so no shuttle bus is needed. A beautiful place and a very easy DIY destination for just for a wander. For those on an excursion then you have about 200 mt walk after getting off the ship to the coaches.

The Shopping centre just outside the Port Terminal offers free Wi-Fi.

There is a lot to do here, unusual statues to find and plenty of tours available for the DIY person if that is what you want with nearly everything within walking distance, the only exceptions are the lighthouse and aquarium, these are a fair distance from the ship.

Suggestions

On leaving the Dock area the local tourist service are normally on hand for street maps.

As you walk out of the port there are 2 companies offering tours round La Coruna, both departed at about 11am from just outside the port. Excellent tour with 4 stops, You get to see all highlights & spend a reasonable amount of time at the sites, eg 30 mins at Tower of Hercules. The trip lasts nearly 3 hours and only €15pp (2017)

There is a nice tourist tram that goes all the way from the port (east side of town) to the famous lighthouse (north side) and the beach (west side). The town has Europe's longest urban sea promenade, nearly 10ks walk, with excellent views. The old town with its churches and plazas is worth a stroll, as well as the San Anton Castle right by the water (now an archaeological museum) and the San Carlos Gardens nearby.

If you are feeling fit, walk straight through the town to the far side. Here is a nice beach if you fancy a swim. Follow the road around to the right and up the hill passing the Aquarium and keep going until you reached the Tower of Hercules, a 2000 year old light house, still working. You can go to the top, €3pp, there is a desk you need to check in through, this opens at 10am. After a stroll around its base try a nice walk around the extensive gardens to its front and side, some great sculptures here. Now, if you do fancy the walk, do not follow the road and promenade around to the right when you leave the port, it is much further that way.

Closer to the port is the Plaza de Maria Pita, a most beautiful, expansive plaza and the gateway into the old town section. The square itself is dominated by The Town Hall building, really beautiful architecture. It is bristling with some top-quality restaurants and bars and within a short walking distance of the shopping district and also the city's port.

Try the nearby Military Museum - free entry & very informative. It is near the gardens where Sir John Moore's tomb is.

In and around the old town are lots of nice seafood restaurants and tapas bars that offer local specialties like mussels, crayfish, scallops and octopus as well as the more recognised Spanish dishes like albóndigas (Spanish meatballs) or tortilla, along with local wine such as Al Barino and beer. We visited Mason O Gelego, just off Plaza de Maria Pita, a nice tapas bar we found on our first visit. Not much changed, same quiet place and 3 tapas, 1 water and 2 wines and staggering €15 (2015).

There is a good shopping centre with many know brand shops as well as the expensive ones. What you will find here is that the local people are quite friendly, but you not encounter the vying for our attention or tourist dollars that is so prevalent in other cities. It was easy to feel like a local.

Two trips (DIY) you could combine are:

The Aquarium Finisterrae; this is located near the tip of the peninsula and the Tower of Hercules close by.

For the aquarium the cost is €10pp entrance (2016) but only 4 euro for senior citizens.

Cruise Destinations

The Towers of Hercules & Sculpture Park; the lighthouse has been in continuous operation for almost 2,000 years. There are 239 steps to the top but the view over the city is worth the effort. Entrance to the lighthouse is €3pp, the Sculpture Park is free.

They are both about 4 miles from the cruise terminal and 100 mts apart, so a taxi shouldn't cost too much. Or you could also take the bus to the lighthouse, great views, and then take it again, all the way around the island. 2 hour trip for I think 1 Euro each, but beware, only 1 bus an hour.

Many cruisers take the excursion to Santiago de Compostela. This trip includes a brief introduction on the journey there (1 hour) and then your own time. It really is well worth a visit. The Cathedral is magnificent both inside and out, but the old and new town are worth exploring as well. La Coruna to Santiago de Compostela has the distance advantage over Vigo by about 20 minutes.

San Sebastian



San Sebastián is a resort town on the Bay of Biscay in Spain's mountainous Basque Country.

San Sebastián has four main centres of action. The lively Parte Vieja (old town) lies across the neck of Monte Urgull, the bay's eastern headland, and is where the most popular pintxo bars are to be found. South of the Parte Vieja is the commercial and shopping district, the Área Romántica, its handsome grid of late-19th-century buildings extending from behind Playa de la Concha to the banks of Río Urumea. On the

east side of the river is the district of Gros, a pleasant enclave that, with its relaxed ambience and the surfing beach of Playa de Gros, makes a cheerful alternative to the honeypots on the west side of the river. Right at the opposite, western end, of the city is Playa de Ondarreta (essentially a continuation of Playa de la Concha), a very upmarket district known as a millionaires' belt on account of its lavish holiday homes.

While many visitors come for the beaches, arts celebrations and fiestas, San Sebastian is serious about its food and drink. The Old Quarter's narrow, winding streets are full of bars and restaurants, and in the modern city, sidewalk cafes are all around. The city specialises in seafood.

You berth in Pasajes which is about 5 miles away. The entrance to the harbour is minute - and looks impossible from a distance. You are then shuttled to San Sebastian - a beautiful little town.

Suggestions

Stroll around the streets and long the harbour to the Aquarium/Marine museum. Great aquarium on bottom floor but upper floors have very interesting historical and geological histories of area and of the local whaling and fishing industry. Fossils, scale models of ships, and lots more.

Parte Vieja; A pleasant meander through the streets of this old part of town. It is fun to peruse the various shops, sites, and museums, and pop in for food and beverages at the many restaurants and bars.

Monte Urgull; A really nice attraction in San Sebastian. Not a very hard climb and nice views of the city and the beaches.

San Telmo Museoa; Well laid out museum in a very nice building. Get the audio guide to walk around with as it explains a lot. And although there is a bit of signage in English, there isn't much. This is a good place to spend an hour or two.

Santander



Santander is the capital city of the Cantabria region on Spain's north coast and is located on the northern coast of Spain and enjoys a stunning location nestled on a small peninsular jutting between the busy waters of the Bay of Santander and the glittering seas of the Bay of Biscay.

The area surrounding the city is lined with 11 sandy beaches, which are perfect for sun worshipers and water sports enthusiasts alike.

Those looking to discover Santander away from the beaches will find a city as historic as it is beautiful. The Cathedral of Santander was built between 13th and 14th centuries on top of preceding holy buildings and combines Gothic and Romanesque architecture.

Suggestions

Peninsula of Magdalena; Nice park, parts of it were busy, other parts were very peaceful. There is a play area for kids, a lighthouse, gorgeous views of Santander and the Sardinero, a palace built for the King and Queen of Spain, and even penguins and sea lions in a free mini zoo. Definitely worth taking a loop around this peninsula.

Archaeological museum; this museum is superbly designed, with many interesting and informative exhibits about the early history of this part of Spain.

Palacio Real de La Magdalena; and the surrounding gardens are a great place to spend a few hours as a couple or with the kids. There are some breath-taking views and some really interesting things to see. There is a small tourist train which is a lot of fun and it takes you for a tour around the park and the palace. On the grounds there is a small kid's park with a bar, some animals; Sea-lions, penguins and seals. It's great to take a stroll to admire the beauty of the Palace and the surroundings.

In town go across the gardens to the right. There is a little narrow street that will take you back one street to a covered precinct area with bars and restaurants.

Try a walk along the front past the Marina to the Sandy beaches.

Seville



Seville is the capital of southern Spain's Andalusia region. It's famous for flamenco dancing, particularly in its Triana neighbourhood.

Situated on the river Guadalquivir, southern Spain's largest city has been home to Carmen, Don Juan and Figaro, and its Gothic cathedral is the resting place of Columbus. Muslim and Jewish art can be seen throughout the Reales Alcazares. It's a contagiously romantic city whose celebratory ambiance pervades Seville's winding streets and spills out of the bars

and tapas parlours of Santa Cruz and Plaza Alfalfa. Make sure to climb the Giralda tower for a spectacular view of the city.

Only the small cruise ships can get here. You enter the Guadalquivir in the early hours of the morning. This is followed by a leisurely sail up the river on your way to this city, passing countryside, farmland and rice fields. The locals will come out to wave to you. One of the bridges needs to be raised to let the ship through, and then the ship will turn round and be backed down the river into the dock area.

Cruise Destinations

Suggestions

There is very little around the port as very few ships can navigate the river. A walk into the town area will take about 30 mins.

If you are planning to DIY then my advice would be to plan what you want to see prior to arriving.

The town offers much for the tourist. There are Horse and Carriages offering tours around. Then you have the Parca Maria Luisa which leads to the magnificent Plaza Espana. This features a huge semi-circular building with towers at each end. There are hundreds of mosaic tiles and each Spanish City is represented.

There are also taxis available, €6 and takes about 10 minutes to town. Just outside the port is a hop on hop off bus that offers a 2 hour tour around Seville. If you decide on this option, get off at the Torre del Oro and walk to the Cathedral, Giralda Tower and through the attractive narrow streets near the Alcazar. The cathedral area, which houses the large Gothic Cathedral where the remains of Christopher Columbus are entombed, is a very busy area with lots of tourist shops and bars.

If you do visit the Cathedral then beware the queues to get into the Cathedral will be horrendous, so if this is on your must do then it might be worth looking at a tour that is more than "On your own"? This would get you into the cathedral faster.

Once in the Cathedral and if you are feeling very energetic then a steep climb up the bell tower provides stunning views over the whole of Seville.

If any of you are looking for inspiration as to what ceramic tiles would look good in your kitchen or bathroom then the Royal Palace, which some say are better than the Alhambra, is the place to head for....the palace walls are covered in them, indeed hundreds of thousands of them all in different colours and designs.

The ceramic tile outlets are in Triana which is the Gypsy / Flamenco quarter of Seville, one only needs to cross the Guadalquivir River to visit this very interesting district. There are a number of other districts of course, each has an easy to follow walking itinerary

If overnight here and you want something different then in and around town are some authentic Spanish restaurants, with canopies which spray cooling water to keep the temperature and air around comfortable.

This port is an option from **Cadiz**.

Cruise Destinations

Vilagarcía de Arousa



Vilagarcía de Arousa is the largest town on the southerly coast of the ria de Arousa (bay) and faces Rianxo on the opposing coastline. It has a large marina with a promenade and a number of café and bars, most of which are housed in a new building facing the harbour.

The town itself is neither good nor bad, but holds no medieval quarter and mixes low and semi high rise buildings.

There are a number of hotels and even a MacDonal's, but

any tourist appeal lacks a Galician flavour.

Suggestions

Miguel Hernandez Park; Miguel Hernandez Gardens are in the leisure district of Marina at Mariña Avenue. It is a welcoming and comfortable place. There are beautiful fountains, statues, a large variety of plants and trees and benches to sit on. Just across the park-garden is the marina village.

Vilagarcía de Arousa monastery; As you arrived you ring a bell and are then given a brief tour of the monastery.

Vigo



Vigo, the Gateway to the Atlantic, is a great combination of ancient history, beautiful beaches and a modern cosmopolitan outlook. A truly amazing city, that offers a warm welcome along with beautiful surroundings.

Most tourists visiting Vigo for the first time are surprised and impressed with the city's old quarter, a district that is often given scant mention in guides and at tourist stations.

Vigo's old district is not as expansive as some of Galicia's other historic quarters, but it does cover an interesting area on the slopes above the marina. High points of this zone are a number of beautiful plazas along with buildings and streets that have survived from the medieval period and show the humble beginnings of the original settlement. This old district is one of the most underrated in Galicia.

The ship will berth right in the town a short walk away from an excellent shopping centre, so no need for a shuttle.

If you are visiting Vigo for a short while, then don't waste your time hanging around the port, all the best places are in town.

Suggestions

It's best to get a map or at least a plan of the central part of Vigo before you go anywhere. There is a tourist information kiosk as you come off the ship, by the large head and shoulders statue. This is also where the tourist bus goes from. The bus gives a two hour tour of Vigo and the surrounding area. It's good value at just €7.50 and leaves from outside tourist information at 10am, 12noon, 4.30pm and 6.30pm. Although it is hop on, hop off you need to be aware that there is just one bus - so it'll be 2 - 4 and half hours before you can hop back on!

Tours 4 Cruisers. This company were outside Vigo port offering tours for €17pp, good coach and the guides are well dressed with good English. They offer an approx 3 hour tour. Please email info@tours4cruisers.com with any comments or questions.

Cruise Destinations

The Old Town has elegant fountains, monuments. You can climb up La Guia Hill for the fabulous views of the city and the Rande Straits.

There are plenty of shopping opportunities in Vigo, as it has an abundance of pretty little shops, as well as large shopping centres. Wander up to El Corte Ingles then stroll back through the town and down to the harbour front which is a nice little walk.

If you would like to go to the beach in Vigo, you would have to take a regular bus (number 10 from the street across the pier) or a taxi that would cost you about 10-15 Euros to the nearest beach, Samil or La Fuente. There are boats and catamarans to Cangas, just across the bay, that run every half an hour from 7 am till 10 pm. It costs about 3 Euros per way, you can buy the tickets right at the pier where your cruise arrives. The boat ride is just 15 minutes and you can get a great overview of the harbour from it. Sometimes, there are even dolphins swimming along the way. Once you get to Cangas, there is a nice big beach to the right of the pier called "Rodeira" it can get a bit crowded during the months of July and August but it is still a nice place to lie in the sun.

There are also some boats going to Cies Islands, however check you have enough time if you are just stopping over from a cruise but it is a very beautiful place to visit, the main beach at Cies Islands has been named the "most beautiful beach in the world" by the newspaper *The Guardian*.

Further Afield:

About 60 miles outside Vigo is the world-famous shrine of Santiago de Compostela. This shrine is one of the important places of pilgrimage.

AROUND BRITAIN

CHANNEL ISLANDS

Guernsey - St Peters Port



Guernsey, a British Crown dependency in the English Channel, is one of the Channel Islands. It's known for beach resorts like Cobo Bay and the scenery of its coastal cliffs.

A busy port since Roman times and one-time home of Victor Hugo, Guernsey's capital, St Peter Port, is the prettiest town in the Channel Islands with fine Georgian and Regency houses, tumbling terraced gardens, winding streets and hidden leafy alleyways.

Guernsey is very pretty. Some beautiful beaches and easy to get around. Such a lot to see and do and so little time.

This is a tender port. Be warned that sometimes ships have to miss this port due to the high swells of the sea. For the less able, St Johns ambulance let you hire a wheelchair free of charge if you notify them in advance and they will meet you at the harbour with it!

Suggestions

History lovers will be in their element exploring Castle Cornet, the last Royalist stronghold of the English Civil War and now home to several museums and theatrical events.

The best way to discover the true beauty of Guernsey is on foot, exploring the Ruettes - tranquil, quiet lanes that are dedicated to walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

For a great view of the sites try a bus trip. Take the No. 91 bus around the island. It normally runs every hour from the bus terminus, if there is a ship in port they put a bus on every 20 minutes so even if there's a queue you won't have to wait too long. The trip lasts about 90 minutes and is a real bargain at £1. However, if you want to get on and off along the route then an all-day ticket is £4.50. The terminus is a few hundred metres along to the left as you leave the area where the tender moors. Sometimes the driver gives you a running commentary of the history of the island and pointed out the local landmarks. The driver also pulled in at various beauty spots on the island to allow passengers to take photos. Halfway through the trip, he announced that we were approaching the public toilets and offered the passengers a comfort stop! If you do decided on the bus trip be careful, the buses are small to negotiate the narrow and winding roads and get full and many people are left waiting at stops along the way.

Castle Cornet; it dominates the entrance to the harbour with its massive grey outer walls. To make the most of this, try a guided tour, you will be entertained, educated and amused for an hour and a half. After your tour continue your walk round the Castle, enjoying the wonderful views of Guernsey, Herm and the sea. There are 5 museums, each very different, but all very interesting, and lots of little semi hidden gardens in the Castle. Also, do not miss the noonday firing of the cannon, the scarlet clad officers give a great display. All in all, an excellent way to spend half a day, However, be warned, flat, comfortable shoes needed, there are lots of steps and cobbles to negotiate. Cost £10, or £9 for 60+. (2016). Afterwards carry on along the breakwater to the Lighthouse for stunning views of your ship at anchor.

Fort Grey was a bastion against Napoleon and is now a fascinating Shipwreck Museum while the German Occupation Museum gives a vivid account of island life during WWII.

The German museum is just up the road, no need to pay excursion prices, easy walking distance. And less than a fiver to get in, P&O charge around £40 just to be taken a 3/4 min trip from harbour to museum.

The Underground Military Hospital is worth a visit if a little eerie. However, give the aquarium a miss.

Hauteville House; Victor Hugo's house. It is within walking distance from the harbour, but mind you, it's uphill. His house tells so many stories about this man - his beliefs and his worries. The house is strange and wonderful almost gothic style tastes in furniture and soft furnishings and wonderful inscriptions and messages hidden in many places. Now, you have to book a visit, on-line, for the guided tour, Full price (over 27 yo) : £8, Reduced rate (18-26 yo, teachers) : £6, Free : under 18, unemployed, disabled. The gardens however are free to explore. (Closed September - April)

Candie Gardens; In a splendid location looking out to sea, the gardens are a restful and interesting place to visit. There is the museum together with a cafe, the upper gardens with a splendid statue of Victor Hugo and then the lower gardens - a real sun trap. Although it is quite a climb to the top of the hill, and a good 15 mins walk, the gardens are quite worth it.

For a lunch recommendations then try, le petite bistro; situated on a corner just one street back from the main road as you disembark the tender. The lunch menu was served between noon and 2pm but the adjoining Le Petit Cafe advertised a great menu with no time restrictions. The two establishments are connected by an opening on the inside so it's possible all menus are available in both venues. Then there is the terrace cafe, overlooking the harbour it also does lovely food.

When you have finished sightseeing, do leave time for shopping, as Duty Free Guernsey offers some of the world's best bargains on cameras and electrical goods, jewellery, perfume and wine (please note opening times might change during the weekend)

It is also possible to visit the Island of Sark. A 40 minute ride away by ferry from Guernsey. Visitors arriving at Sark can choose either to walk up the footpath or take a seat on the "toast-rack", the tractor-drawn bus. There are no cars on Sark, only tractors, bikes or horses and carriages. It has quiet pretty corners and breath-taking vistas. You can visit the Occupation and Heritage Museum, watch chocolates being made, or walk to the famous La Coupee that links Big Sark to Little Sark in the south. The pace of life is leisurely and relaxed and the perfect place to get away from it all. I can recommend the P&O excursion, 'Isle of Sark' £46pp (2015). You are taken by tender to Guernsey and board straight onto the Sark Ferry. On here you are given a map, return ferry tickets and return tractor bus tickets, for good views there are places to sit outside at both front and back of the ferry. You need the weather for this excursion but worth every penny.

Much better to go on an organised excursion to Sark than try a DIY. Sometimes there are problems with the tides and at least if you are on an organised excursion they have to get you back to the ship.

ENGLAND

Falmouth



Where you dock depends, the smaller ships can come alongside the larger ones have to anchor out in the bay.

Falmouth has one of the deepest natural harbours in the world. Henry VIII built Pendennis Castle which was further fortified to deter the Armada .

When you get off the ship you will be greeted by a group of volunteers call the Falmouth Ambassadors, who will hand out leaflets and answer your questions on places of local interest.

This is lovely place on the south western edge of Cornwall with plenty to do in and around, it really depends on your interests.

Suggestions

Falmouth itself is quite enjoyable for quiet amble. There is a nice waterfront and it has a lovely beach, lots of shops and winding streets.

In and around the town is the Maritime Museum, Falmouth art gallery, Gyllyngdune Garden, all within a stroll of the harbour and town centre. Then there is Pendennis Castle which has fantastic views of the estuary and beach either side and has an interesting collection in heavy guns. You can walk to the castle but the hill is quite steep and the taxi only cost just over £3 each way!

If you are not cruised out try the harbour for a peaceful boat day trip, a boat ride up the Helford to see Daphne Du Maurier's old house or a leisurely cruise on the river Fal to Truro or over to St Mawes.

Further afield; if you enjoy plants The Eden Project is worth a visit but, the traffic could be a problem. Then there is Heligan Gardens, it was a large estate which had been neglected, due to the Great War, and now it is fully restored well worth seeing. Then you have St Ives & St Michaels Mount these are picturesque, but very busy at peak times of the year.

Liverpool



The cruise terminal occupies a fantastic location close to the Liver building, so the ship is very close to the main city. Right next to the Mersey Ferry if you fancy a song.

If you decide to stay in Liverpool there is so much to see and do and you do not need to book any ship's tours. There is so much to do and see here - lots of galleries, museums and exhibitions most of which are free -so enjoy.

Suggestions

The new terminal is so convenient and it is only a few minutes' walk to the attractions near the waterfront, eg Albert Dock area comprising of: Museum of Liverpool Life, Maritime Museum, International Slavery Museum, Tate Gallery, Albert Dock, The Beatles Story, Ferry Across the Mersey.

There are 2 open top, hop on hop off buses that run from nearby (one is £6 with a recorded commentary and the other is £9 with a live commentary).

Cruise Destinations

It is only about 15-20 minutes to walk to the main shopping centre of Liverpool, ie Liverpool One, with lots of other places to visit and maybe slightly more to walk to the Anglican and Catholic Cathedrals.

This is a useful site to browse - [Visit Liverpool - Tourist Attractions - Hotels - What's On - Shopping](#). If you want a 'Beatles Tour' see: [Magical Mystery Tour Liverpool - The Beatles Magical Mystery Tour](#)

If you do decide to go further afield then **Chester** has a lot to offer. An old Roman city and its Roman city walls are the most complete in Britain. There is a lot of history, a Roman amphitheatre, and medieval half-timbered buildings.

There is a lot to do and see in Chester, The Cathedral is beautiful and has recently been opened to the public for free. Walk around its walls and see the pretty Victorian Eastgate Clock. The Grosvenor Gardens, opposite the Visitor Centre is lovely to walk around and for the young at heart there is a Miniature Railway for you to get on board and enjoy the ride. Fancy a trip along the River Dee in one of the many boats. There are HOHO buses for that overview and one of them is an old fashioned 1924 period open-top vintage sightseeing tour bus.

For shopping it has unique half-timbered galleried shops, which means you can shop whatever the weather.

Scilly Isles



St Mary's is the largest and most populous island of the Isles of Scilly,

Hugh Town is the central hub with its cluster of shops, banks, churches, post office, cafés, galleries, restaurants and pubs as well as the wonderful museum. It has three lovely beaches in very close proximity - Porthcressa with a children's play area close by; Town Beach, a perfect spot to watch the comings and goings on the Quay; and Porthmellon which also hosts the Sailing Centre.

This is a tender port.

If a Sunday then the majority of the place will be closed.

You disembark in the town. Now, depending on if low or high tide there could be approx 30 steps to climb. If low tide these are very dodgy because they are covered in slime where the sea has covered them at high tide.

There is an information centre in town and also lots of cafes and shops. In many cruisers opinion the price of food in the local restaurants, bars and cafes is ridiculously high.

There are boat trips to see the seals and birds and a bus that goes to Worlds End.

Southampton



Southampton is a port city on England's south coast and is your gateway to the English countryside, historical monuments and of course, London. Visit mysterious Stonehenge, explore the seaside or take a trip into London and see the famous sights.

Now first, although it says (London/Southampton) you should know that London is over 2 hrs away, by coach, from where you will berth. So, make sure you plan.

Suggestions

We start closer to home, or port.

Southampton SeaCity museum; The majority of the museum is taken up with the Titanic history which is done very well. This museum is not an expensive option and an hour or so visit is all you need. It is centrally located within walking distance from the city centre cruise port.

Southampton Town Walls; It is surprising what you learn when you walk the walls and follow the trail. Historically all along the walk guides you and is fascinating. Just over a mile, best to start at the Bargate, however you can start at any point really. Watch out for the medieval wine vaults, medieval churches and also a view of the waterfront where you can see the ships coming and going.

Tudor House and Garden; Lovely museum house that you can walk around. Highly recommended if you want to use up an hour or two and is part of the city wall walk. Entrance fee is £5pp (2017)

Try a trip to one of the lovely villages in the New Forest, maybe Beaulieu and take on the National Motor Museum.

A little further afield you have Portsmouth Harbour. Visit Mary Rose and HMS Victory along with as much of the Naval Dockyard as possible.

If you are looking at a visit to London then I suggest, because of the distance, you book an organised trip.

FAROE ISLANDS

Klasvik



Klaksvík is the second largest town of the Faroe Islands. The town is located on Borðoy, which is one of the northernmost islands.

Towering above the entrance to the harbour of Klaksvík is the pyramid mountain on the impressive island of Kunoy, and around the well-sheltered bay and harbour, the dwellings are beautifully spread on the hillsides.

Klaksvík has all the comforts of a modern town. The town has a vibrant music scene and an active, amateur theatre group.

Suggestions

Christianskirkjan; This church might be the most interesting in the Faroes - large by Faroese standards, airy, and with a really interesting architecture and history. There will be a volunteer around to explain the story of the actual boat hanging from the ceiling, and also to point the way to the wood carvings in the basement that are even more interesting to experience than the pictures suggest.

Cruise Destinations

Sometimes there is a ships tour around the island. The scenery along the winding coastal roads was breathtaking, and engineers have created a number of road tunnels connecting the islands together.

Torshavn



Situated between the Norwegian Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, with Iceland on one side and Norway on the other, this group of islands offer steep mountains, idyllic villages and a unique light.

Torshavn, meaning 'Thor's Harbour', is the capital of the Faroe Islands and one of the smallest capital cities in the world. It's enchanting; centuries old harbour side village is largely preserved intact. One of the most distinguishing features here is the colourful individualism of its houses,

with their mix of painted and grass roofs.

Torshavn has plenty to offer to its tourists as it is the cultural centre of the islands.

Suggestions

Tinganes: It is the old part of Torshavn and the historic location of the Faroese parliament. Made up of small wooden houses covered with turf roofs, some even dates back to almost 500 years.

The Nordic House: It is the most important cultural institution in the Faroes that host exhibitions. The Nordic House is a centre of great significance that sets various cultural events about the ethnicity of the Faroese and the Nordic Countries.

Listasavn Føroya: Listasavn Føroya is Torshavns art museum located at the northern end of the Park of Torshavn. It lies in close immediacy to the Nordic House and is known for everlasting exhibits of Faroese arts.

Kirkjubøur: Kirkjubøur, the momentous historical site lies to the southernmost village on Streymoy, Faroe Islands. Located on the west coast the place, it has got a ancient history.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Something to remember is that Northern Ireland has its own UK£, so just be aware they are not accepted everywhere.

Belfast



On the cruise into Belfast you will have excellent views of the new Titanic Museum and the Harland & Wolff Gantries as well as an old WWI battleship. When you arrive in the cruise port it is 5 mins drive into Belfast town centre. About a 15 mins walk.

History: Belfast is a divided and segregated city, yes it still is. There is still a huge (metal) wall that divides the city into two. But let this not put you off, tourists will not be going into and walking around those areas by themselves, although

some tours will visit them to see the murals that both communities have on display. Belfast has a lot to offer in history and it is a safe city and the city centre is neutral and a beautiful place to walk around especially the cathedral quarter for their lovely bars and restaurants.

Cruise Destinations

Suggestions

Try the city bus ride tour, excellent value at £12.50, the ticket gives you 2 full days to explore. To get to the Titanic Quarter you can use the shuttle bus to the town centre then catch a bus out to there. The cost for seniors is £14.50, (2016), However you can get a taxi for about £5. It is recommended that you buy your tickets online.

There is a Yellow Umbrella walking tour that is very interesting.

For an informative tour try *Paddy and his Black Cab Tours of Belfast and the Giants Causeway*. You will start with a drive along through Belfast itself, then off into the Antrim countryside, and onto to the Giant's Causeway. After all that it is time to return to the ship.

Now, what many people do not realise is that the Giant's Causeway is 'free'. If you walk through the visitor centre you have to pay but if you walk along the side entrance it is free. There is a shuttle bus to the bottom and it is £1.

A recommendation from a local is: http://www.cityandcausewaytours.com/our_tours.html
Another one is; Valuecabs The Giants Caseway and Bushmills Tour. £170 42.50 each if you are 4 good value.

Londonderry



Derry, also known as Londonderry, is a city on the River Foyle in Northern Ireland. It's known for the intact 17th-century Derry's Walls with 7 gates.

Suggestions

Visitor Information Centre; The staff are very well informed on what to see and where to go, not just in the city but across the whole of the northwest.

City Walls; The Derry walls are definitely a must in the city.

There are great views when walking around them as well as many historical points.

Peace bridge; You have to walk this bridge to understand its beauty and attraction. It is one of the best attractions of the city.

City Tours; Many say this is a good company to book a tour with. <http://www.derrycitytours.com/>

SCOTLAND

Something to remember is that Scotland has its own UK£, so just be aware they are not accepted everywhere.

Dundee



Dundee is a coastal city on the Firth of Tay estuary in eastern Scotland.

Mixing a fascinating history with a fresh, modern look, the city of Dundee has arts and culture in abundance, family-friendly attractions and all the greats - from shopping to food and drink and entertainment.

Cruise Destinations

Suggestions

Discovery Point; Excellent attraction. This is a super modern attraction telling the story of the ship Discovery and it's expedition to Antarctica and the people who sailed on her from the Captain Robert Falcon Scot, Shackleton to its crew. Of course the star of the show is the ship itself. Gift shop & Café.

The Dundee Law; Worth visiting to have a beautiful view over Dundee and the Tay. It's free. Benches are available.

The McManus: Dundee's Art Gallery & Museum; This Museum looks like a church from the outside, this was the intention of the architect. The museum is very interesting, it shows you the history of Dundee in one part and elsewhere a painting exhibition and other historic artefacts.

Edinburgh



This handsome capital has an eclectic mix of medieval and Georgian architecture. One of the city's most obvious attractions is Edinburgh Castle, first founded in the 7th century. It's still the headquarters for several of the British Army's Scottish regiments and, at noon each day, the sound of a cannon fired from the castle's battlements reverberates throughout the city. The castle sits at one end of the Royal Mile with the Palace of Holyroodhouse at the other. Founded as a monastery in 1128, Holyroodhouse is the official Scottish residence of Queen Elizabeth II.

Princes Street is the shopping district, while George Street is home to bars and restaurants. Those with a love of art will want to visit the National Portrait Gallery. Alternatively see life as it was once lived by touring the city's remaining underground vaults. For the more active visitor the view from the volcanic sill of Arthur's Seat may be worth a refreshing, if slightly strenuous walk.

Cruise ships have 3 options to dock/anchor Queensferry, Leith, or Rosyth. However, Rosyth is not often used and Leith can only be used by the smaller cruise ships. Most ships do tend to dock at Queensferry. The larger ship also tender into Newhaven, close to Leith.

If your berth is Queensferry or Rosyth, do get up on deck to glimpse the Forth Bridge as you sail under it.

Leith is the closest to the city and is home to the Royal yacht Britannia. Edinburgh is about 10 mins by bus/taxi. There are HOHO buses available, every 15 mins in high season, and 30 mins otherwise. Taxis are available outside the terminal.

To get into town when leaving tender at South Queensferry. Sometimes there is a local coach company at the dockside offering shuttle transfers into Edinburgh for approx. £10pp return. By train, turn left and take path and steps on the right up to Dalmeny railway station and catch the train, it is a steep path and a lot of steps, about 120, but easily doable unless unsteady on feet. Trains are every 20 mins and the journey is 15 mins..

To get into town from Newhaven. Just off the port area you can catch one of two local buses that go to Edinburgh, or you can take the free shuttle to the Ocean Terminal where Britannia ver1 is berthed. From here you can visit said ship, or just outside there is a better choice of buses, about 6 different ones, going into Edinburgh. Cost from whatever area you want to go from is £1.50pp single or £4pp all day. You just do your sums. The journey is about 15 mins and takes you into Princess Street.

Cruise Destinations

Suggestions

Edinburgh is a superb city; you could not possibly do the place justice in just a few hours off a cruise ship. You really need at least three days to fully enjoy. There is a HOHO tour bus. Full tour takes an hour and buses run every 20min in summer and 30 min in autumn/spring. There are 13 places you can join the bus.

Close to Princess Street is: The Scott Monument Tower, 287 steps with various levels, Climb up Carlton Hill for fantastic views over the city and the port area, walk through the East and West Gardens.

It has a mix of architecture. One of the city's biggest attractions is Edinburgh Castle, it dominates the skyline. The castle can be a bit of a mixture, queue wise. After buying your tickets head up to the Castle then onto the Castle Keep and follow this with the Scottish Crown Jewels. There is a lot to see and worth the entrance money overall, but the jewels were probably not worth a long wait. Remember that at noon each day the cannon is fired from the battlements.

At the other end of the Royal Mile is the Palace of Holyrood house the official Scottish residence of Queen Elizabeth II. The Scottish Parliament has a free behind the scenes tour. This takes you into offices and corridors, the committee rooms and into the debating chamber. Very interesting!

Those with a love of art will want to visit the National Portrait Gallery. Alternatively see life as it was once lived by touring the city's remaining underground vaults. For the more active visitor the view from the volcanic sill of Arthur's Seat may be worth a refreshing, if slightly strenuous walk.

Other places of interest are St Giles Cathedral and remember that Greyfriars Bobby is famous in Edinburgh. The Museum of childhood, just off the Royal Mile is a step back in time to our childhood and Rosslyn chapel is worth a short visit too if you are a da Vinci code fan.

For shopping then it is onto the Royal Mile, filled with souvenir shops, mostly selling kilts, whisky and items with Scottie dogs on. So, Princes Street is the shopping district, while George Street is home to bars and restaurants. If you like good whisky then Royal Mile Whiskies on the High Street (opposite St Giles Cathedral) is worth a visit.

Greenock/Glasgow



For this port what you decide to do will depend on how adventurous you are.

Greenock is your Port of Call. The Ocean Terminal has a tourist centre with plenty of maps, leaflets and lots of information about the surrounding area. They will let you know bus timings to Glasgow and where to catch the bus. They will point you in the direction of the train station if you are so inclined. Also in the terminal are small stalls/shops selling local ware. Look out for the dancing Scotsman as you

sail into the Terminal, and have your camera ready.

Suggestions

You can remain in port, as you get off the ship there is a desk where they do 3 local excursions free of charge (donations only). The choice you have is: Gourock Tour, Greenock Tour or Port Glasgow and Newark Castle Tour. Note that for that last tour although the tour is free, entry to the castle requires a small entry fee. You need to book as you get off, only 30 passengers are on the minibus.

Greenock itself has some nice places to visit, try the McLean Museum and Art Gallery. Taxis are readily available at the dock they do tours of/to Largs, Loch Lomond Shores where you can shop in Jenners, eat in the Highland Skirley, Helensburgh, tour of Loch Lomond etc.

Cruise Destinations

The other thing on offer is a taxi tour at £30 per hour. Other things on offer, you can pick up a map for town walking routes and there are buses going to Loch Lomond where there are waterbus trips on the Loch itself.

Then further afield in and around Inverclyde (the authority area of Greenock, Port Glasgow and Gourock) there is plenty to do. You could take a bus or train just along the coast to Gourock. This is a lovely place for a walk with a couple of decent eateries and great views if you wish to climb a bit. Try the ferry across to Dunoon. This is worth a short visit on a nice day. Another trip is to the Isle of Bute (from Wemyss Bay). Or visit the Loch Lomond area.

However, the port in Greenock is the gateway into Glasgow. A taxi to Glasgow is £40, we over heard the price and I suspect that this is a single. There are lots of taxis outside the terminal. The train takes between 45 - 55 mins depending on which one you catch. There are two stations in Greenock. Greenock West is up a hill, Greenock Central is much easier to reach from the Cruise Terminal. It takes about 40 minutes and there are 2 to 3 trains per hour, around £7, (2014) off peak return.

The HoHo city bus tour is around £11 but is good; you can go round the full loop for an overview of the city then stop off at the points that interest you. But, read up on Glasgow because the bus will not take you everywhere.

There is the Kelvingrove art gallery and museum, Princes square shopping centre, Macintosh willow tea rooms, Buchanan street precinct

For further information try: <http://www.visitscotland.com/destinations-maps/glasgow-clyde-valley/see-do/>
Or, http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attractions-g186534-Activities-Glasgow_Scotland.html

Invergordon



From the tiny port of Invergordon, the beautiful Scottish Highlands are yours to explore. Perhaps you will visit the nearby city of Inverness or try to catch a glimpse of the elusive monster in Loch Ness?

Most cruises disembark at Admiralty Pier, within 500mtrs of Invergordon High Street shops and services. The Invergordon Tourism Alliance (ITA) provides a Welcome Host Service opposite the pier gate on Shore Road.

Although you berth it is a long walk along a pontoon with nowhere to sit and another 5-10 mins into small town. Coaches and car hire are not allowed on the pontoon.

Close to Loch Ness if you are looking for an excursion.

Suggestions

In and around the town try the Invergordon murals. The murals are painted on the end walls of the houses and celebrated everything from 'Century of Sport' to 'Volunteer Spirit'. The ones around the railway station are the 'piece de resistance', the whole of the station is a mural depicting 'The long Goodbye', a war time scene of soldiers leaving home. Street art at its best.

Invergordon Naval & Heritage Museum offers a fascinating visual tour of photographs and exhibits from yester-year.

Cruise Destinations

For a private tour try: Nigel (www.shoreexcursions.co.uk). He can put on a tour for the excellent price of £25pp in a six-seater people-carrier. You could even hire a car from Kens Garage (£60 per day which can be pre-booked in advance). The paperwork is all done via email before you sailed so on arrival you just needed to visit the office at the end of the pier, sign on the dotted line and pick up the car keys. Then you can spend a leisurely day driving around the whole of Loch Ness and stop off at Castle Urquart en route for some great views of the loch.

If you are thinking about an excursion then stay away from P&O excursion, Leisurely Loch Ness. Coach trip out through the countryside to Loch Ness and back, a short 3 ½ hr trip. This is a guided tour with a running commentary of the places you are passing through. On reaching Loch Ness you stop at a lake side hotel for photos. Here is a model Nessie, for the selfie and then a short walk down to the Loch to take your photos. The hotel also had a Tourist shop. From here you drive onto Beaula a small village for another stop, but except for the ruined church there is nothing here, and then back to the ship.

We did this tour and you know that feeling when something does not live up to expectations, well for both of us, and talking to others later, this was one of those occasions. Yes, the countryside is beautiful but the hotel is a tourist trap, we saw and bought cheaper stuff in Edinburgh, ie we bought a crystal Nessie for £12.99, reduced from £50, in Edinburgh, but here it was £18 for a plastic one. Then the Loch itself was a let-down, the views from the road are all masked by trees, when we went down to the Loch side there was a smell and the area resembled a building site. What we had preserved about Loch Ness and the views were not what we saw. We did stop after the hotel for a photo shoot of Urquhart Castle but the distance if you did not have a telephoto lens was too far. However, we were the only bus to stop out of the 3 that were on this morning excursion. The other sad thing was we drove passed the Nessie Experience Exhibition Centre, OK it may have been touristy but it would have been fun to look at and walk around. All in all for us a 3/10.

Kirkwall



The Orkney Isles are made up of about 70 islands, but only 20 are inhabited. Total population is about 20,000 or so, with about 15,000 living on the main island. You tend to find that people have many links with other groups, so they are always crossing paths.

Kirkwall, the capital of the archipelago, is a Viking town founded in 1035 by Earl Rognvald Brusason. You'll find that the original ancient Norse town has been beautifully preserved and provides an intriguing place to while away your

time.

You could berth or be tendered. If berthed it is a short walk to shuttle buses and approx 10 mins journey into town.

Suggestions

For such a small town, there is plenty to see and do. Visit one of Scotland's finest town houses - The Tankerness House Museum - where examples of Orkney's rich archaeology are on display. Alternatively there are two palaces to explore; the mid-century Bishop's Palace and the stunning Earl's Palace, with its French Renaissance style of architecture. And there's St. Magnus Cathedral, which was founded in 1137 by Earl Rognvald Kolson in memory of his uncle Saint Magnus. The island's 5,000 years of culture ensures you will find history around every corner.

There are some lovely independent shops and not too many national chains so you get some interesting things. But, if you visit on a Sunday then Kirkwall is closed. The other thing to bear in mind, you need good or at least dry weather here to fully enjoy it. The countryside is flat and barren and the wind and rain can whip across the island and go straight through you.

Cruise Destinations

Some of the main sites would be Skara Brae, Ring of Brodgar, Italian Chapel and St Magnus Cathedral. You would need to hire a car though to get to all of them. T

The cathedral of St Magnus is well worth a visit and it houses the Royal Oak memorial. If the weather is good and you are prepared to travel a little then there is a lot to see. The drive across the almost treeless West Mainland is a delight. Driving along the shores of Scapa Flow it is easy to imagine the fleet at anchor. The Italian Chapel on Lamb Holm is amazing and well worth a visit,

For a DIY try the Discover Orkney double decker bus which does a 3 1/2 hour trip for £8.30pp (2015). There is one departure at 10am and another at 2pm. If there is a call for extra buses they will put them on. You have an hour at Skara Brae, a Stone Age village, the best in Europe, with Skiall House a 17th century manor house next door, entrance fee is an extra £5.50pp. Then you stop at the Ring of Brodgar stones; see Scapa Flow and the 2nd town Stromness. Great value for money, although understanding the driver's accent is fun.

James Ingram Fresh fish in breadcrumbs served with chips on the Quayside best ever!

Lerwick



Bustling Lerwick is the capital, and only town, of Scotland's Shetland Islands and it is Britain's most northerly town. Founded in the 17th century to service Dutch herring fleets, a number of its oldest structures, including the fort, were burnt to the ground many years ago. Today most of its historical architecture can be seen along the waterfront, including sandstone buildings, which date from the 18th century.

Perched on the hillside, over the harbour, the town's lanes retain their charm. As you stroll the narrow streets, you will discover a mix of shops and restaurants, whilst up on the hillhead stand more recent additions including villas, public parks and the Town Hall.

A tendered port but almost straight into town. A relatively small town to walk around.

Suggestions

Shetland Museum & Archives: sits on the restored historic Hay's Dock in Lerwick, providing a gateway from which to explore Shetland's rich heritage and culture. Visitors and researchers can explore the fascinating story of Shetland's heritage and culture in one place, with access to a wealth of documents and artefacts covering all aspects of the islands' past at Shetland Museum and Archives.

Croft House Museum: Walk in to the smell of a peat fire. Lots of historical context, tools, how people lived. And do get the key and walk to the mill to see how they ground corn and diverted water.

Further information can be found here: <http://www.shetland-heritage.co.uk/downloads/resources/geographicleaflets/Lerwick.pdf>

Cruise Destinations

Oban



Oban is a tender port and it is a lovely little town.

Now if you are disabled and wheelchair/scooter bound then remember there are virtually no access to shops, cafes so unless you get the weather to eat or have coffee outside then do not bother going on an organised excursion

A good excursion is a visit to Inverary Castle. You drive through lovely scenery with highland cattle grazing, lochs, ruined castles and snow-sprinkled mountains. The castle is a

typical Scottish gothic style mansion with beautiful gardens. This was the ancestral seat of the head of the Campbell clan and still home to the Duke of Argyle.

Portree, Isle of Skye



The largest town on the Isle of Skye owes its existence and a great deal of its charm to its picture postcard harbour. The run of brightly painted buildings down the south-west side is especially striking, as is the natural stone and whitewashed buildings on the north-west side. Portree sits in a superb natural setting, surrounded by high ground and cliffs giving a sense of the rugged nature of Scotland's isles. Historically the small town was the setting for Bonnie Prince Charlie's last days in Scotland. Today the harbour continues to work in a way that has changed little in centuries, still

being used by local fishing boats.

While relatively tranquil compared to other larger portside towns, Portree is nevertheless a bustling port and a thriving cultural centre. Attractions in the town include the Skye Heritage Centre and the associated Aros Experience, designed to bring to life the history and experience of Skye. Also the VisitScotland Information Centre in the town boasts an excellent display of locally produced arts and crafts.

The town is a popular base for exploring the rest of the island. Many visitors are drawn to the spectacular scenery of the Trotternish Ridge to the north as this wild area is dominated by weird and wonderful at the same time rock formations such as the Old Man of Storr, Kilt Rock and the truly extraordinary pinnacles of the Quaraing.

The public transport is not very good.

This is a tender port.

Take some midge repellent.

Suggestions

Information Centre; you will get excellent advice from the friendly staff. They will help you with trips, including a tour around the Trotternish Peninsula, Talisker Distillery and the Oyster Shed, Dunvegan Castle and the 2 churches walk.

Portree Harbour; The picturesque harbour should be on everyone's list of things to check out while in Portree.

If you are thinking DIY then it is suggested that you phone a local taxi firm, before visiting, and book one. There will not be any at the port when you get ashore. It will not be cheap, but if there are 4 of you then you can split the cost. Try Gus on 01478 613 000, and get quote.

Cruise Destinations

Quiraing; Definitely worth it's top rating. The northern portion of Skye is interesting, unique, and just fun to look at. Quiraing stands out given its uniqueness, and proximity to other wonders of Skye.

Dunvegan Castle and gardens are worth a visit. Depending on whether ship is doing a tour or not ,

Scrabster



Scrabster Harbour is your gateway to Thurso, County Caithness and the Northern Highlands - one of the most remote and least settled regions in Europe. The Northern Highlands boast wild and dramatic scenery, from windswept moors and picturesque fishing villages to turbulent Pentland Firth. At nearby John O'Groats, a signpost marks the 874 miles to Land's End in Southern England. The region's solitude and scenic beauty proved a tonic to royalty: following the death of George VI, the late Queen Mother renovated the Castle of Mey near John O'Groats. For nearly 60 years

the castle was her beloved summer residence.

Suggestions

There is not much to do in the port. So a trip to Thurso may be your best option.

Thurso VisitScotland Information Centre, The staff know their subject well and have enthusiasm. Two exhibitions on site - 1 about Dounreay and the other some stone age rocks. Very interesting rooms covering all parts of Thurso and local area history. Better than some large museums. Also not a bad little tea room. Free to enter but they do have voluntary boxes. Well worth a visit for a couple of hours.

The Castle and Gardens of Mey, The castle is just how the Queen Mother left it. It is a 1960/1970 time trip. Some of the castle staircases are not suitable for the less agile people but the garden and tea room are wheelchair friendly. The gardens are excellent and well worth the time to visit. The tea room serves a great cup of tea or coffee accompanied by a delicious tray bake.

Dunnet Head, The most northerly point on the Scottish mainland, although there are no amenities as such, this is a must-see. Spectacular views out to sea all round. Lots of bird life, so take binoculars.

Stornaway Isle of Lewis:



Stornaway is a town on the Isle of Lewis, in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland. The town's population is around 8,000, making it the largest town in the Outer Hebrides.

There is not a lot to do here. Not many shops, there is a park over the river for a nice walk, Cafes and lots of small boats. Also there was an Edinburgh woollen mill shop,

Suggestions

Try a walk up to the castle. It is not open to the public (a safety issue, apparently), but it's a stunning building set in lovely wooded grounds.

This is a must: <http://www.charlesmacleod.co.uk> Charlie Macleod's famous black pudding -

Bostadh Iron Age Settlement? A tour of Harris? Hebridean RIB Adventure?
Lewis and Blackhouse Village? Or you could have a wander around the town.

Tobermory



A tender port with its brightly coloured houses lining the harbour.

The trip to Iona is recommended. You have a two hour drive to the ferry at Ffionfort, with a brief toilet stop at Craigmure, while the guide collected your ferry tickets. The scenery of Mull is stunning. There are seals, herons, highland cattle, hares, red deer and buzzards. Then a drive through the Great Glen broken by salmon rivers and granite outcrops, green with lichen and moss. The lochs are like glass as you

drive along the single track roads that cross the island. The ferry takes about 10 minutes to cross the short stretch of water to Iona. At the landing is a small beach worthy of the Caribbean with white shell sand and turquoise water. It is then a short walk uphill to the famous Abbey.

SOUTHERN IRELAND

Something to remember is that Southern Ireland uses the € (Euro).

Cobh (Cork)



Pronounced 'Cove', Cobh is the cruise port of Ireland's second biggest city, Cork, and boasts one of Europe's largest natural harbours. Poignantly, it was also the final departure point of the ill-fated Titanic.

With its colourful seafront houses, the town has the feel of a true seaside resort, dominated by a cathedral offering fabulous views over the bay.

Six miles inland from the city lies - and we use the word advisedly - the town of Blarney with its famous Blarney Stone. Positioned more than 80-feet up in the battlements of Blarney Castle, legend has it that kissing the limestone block provides the one puckering up with the gift of what is euphemistically called "persuasive" speech.

Suggestions

The sail in is superb with fantastic scenery and colourful houses. The ship berths right in the centre of the town at Ireland's only dedicated Cruise Terminal. It was first called Cove ("The Cove of Cork"). It was renamed Queenstown in 1850 to commemorate a visit by Queen Victoria. This remained the town's name until 1920 when it was renamed Cobh. The town has remained virtually unchanged since the Titanic departed from Cork Harbour in 1912.

If you are staying in Cobh again there is a lot on offer. It is a very attractive town and easy to get around but rather hilly. It has lots of history and interesting statues and monuments dotted around. So, here it all depends on what you want to do.

There is a land train that takes you around the town, there are harbour tours and you can hire your own boat €49 for a family of 5 for 1 hour. If you wish to do your own thing the town is a short 15 min walk away. The walk takes you past a sea view park.

Cruise Destinations

The tourist attractions are focused on the immense maritime and emigration legacy of the town. The Queenstown Story Heritage, Titanic Experience, Titanic Trail walking tour, Cobh Museum, Cobh Road Train, Spike Island tours and St Colman's Cathedral provide plenty to see and do. As you walk through the town there is a memorial to the victims of the Lusitania. If you wish to visit the Titanic Gardens then just be warned that it is about a mile away at the other side of town. The views from St Coleman's Cathedral over the port area are stunning and you will see your cruise ship below.

The old White Star booking office/museum is small, but the visitor centre is about more than just Titanic, also about the post-famine emigration to US.

There are many Typical Irish pubs with live music playing and it is nice to sit outside enjoying a Guinness or Murphys.

Taxis will be close to where you berth to give private tours further afield.

Trips

The Jameson Whiskey factory is 6.5 miles away, in Middleton, and they do factory tours €13.50 entrance fee (€10 for Senior Citizens). The ship was quite expensive but a DIY with a local minicab to the distillery cost about €25 each way for the cab, plus the admission into the distillery. A lot cheaper than the £49 pp the ship wanted.

There are other local taxis offering tours lasting about 2 1/2 hours, which includes a trip to the Blarney Stone for about €90, not bad if there is 4 of you.

Try a tour to Kinsale which is a very quaint little town with narrow streets. You drive through rolling countryside to Fort Charles overlooking Kinsale Harbour, and from where you could see the Old Head of Kinsale where Lusitania sank. Kinsale itself is a pretty town of ` coloured houses and narrow lanes.

Nearby lies **Cork**, European Capital of Culture in 2005, hosts many festivals, ranging from jazz and folk to choral and film. The bustling city centre is home to fascinating shops and markets while traditional Irish music can be heard in many of the historic pubs and bars which populate the city centre.

Cork



Cork gets mixed reviews, some like it others think it is the pits and full of drunks. Something else to bear in mind is that shops shut on a Sunday.

If you are going to Cork then the train station is a short walk away from where you berth and this takes you directly into Cork. The trains run from Cobh on the half hour, the 24 min journey is €9.90pp return. The return trains run on the hour every hour with the last one leaving at 4pm. Trains are small - only two carriages so will be busy. prices are 2017)

For Cork, there are plenty of taxis on the quay side to take you into Cork about €30-€35 each way.

There is also a coach company that offer full day tours if you pre-book for €22pp (2014).

There is a HOHO bus in Cork at a cost of €15pp and €13pp for seniors. (2017)

Cruise Destinations

Dublin



Dublin is a great place. The ships shuttle bus takes you to city. Near to the statue of Molly Malone is the Tourist Information Centre. There is also a lovely department store opposite the Molly Malone Statue.

There is normally a free shuttle to the city, about 20 mins away and you are dropped off in Kildare Street right next to the National Gallery of Ireland.

Suggestions

Trinity College (Book of Kells), Dublin Castle and the shopping areas of O'Connell Street and Grafton Street are all within easy walking distance.

Anything further and you will need transport of some kind, but the HOHO buses go right past all major sites. These go from close to where you are dropped off and cost €17pp (2015). The bus takes you past many great places where you can get off and stop and look around. It will drop you at the Guinness Storehouse, Jameson distillery, Dublin Goal, also pop in to the post office the Museum there has a great overview of life there and how important the GPO building was in their history. It is only small but you get a quick and great overview of life in Ireland etc. and of course there is the Leprechaun museum. If you are looking for the monument to Molly Malone it is near Provost's House close to Trinity College.

Can I also recommend a walk through St Stephens Green, a beautiful park and not far from the drop off point.

You can also take a walk along the river Liffey, long but very scenic.

Try a train up to Malahide, it is a pretty seaside town just North of Dublin.

If you are on an overnight stop then a visit to the Arlington Hotel for a meal and fantastic Irish music and dancing is recommended.

Galway



Galway, a harbour city on Ireland's west coast, sits where the River Corrib meets the Atlantic Ocean. The city's hub is 18th-century Eyre Square, a popular meeting spot surrounded by shops and traditional pubs that often offer live Irish folk music. Nearby, stone-clad cafes, boutiques and art galleries line the winding lanes of the Latin Quarter, which retains portions of the medieval city walls.

Suggestions

The HOHO bus is good value for money at €10 pp. (2017)

Quay Street; Quay Street is Galway's main drag for pubs and stores, and it's the place to go if you're looking for bars and good food. The Galway Whiskey Trail also follows this path, consisting of about a dozen pubs known for their good selection of whiskeys.

Latin Quarter; This place easily rivals the Temple Bar district in Dublin but has a more authentic feel to it.

Cruise Destinations

City Museum; You approach this by passing through the Spanish Arch. It is a really good place to spend an hour or two. There are plenty of exhibits relating to Galway's role in the Irish struggle for independence, and also quite a bit about Ireland's role in World War One. Photographs allowed. A fabulous place for history buffs.

Killybegs



Killybegs is a town in County Donegal, Ireland. It is the largest fishing port in the county and on the island of Ireland.

It is located on the south coast of the county, north of Donegal Bay, near Donegal Town. The town is situated at the head of a scenic harbour and at the base of a vast mountainous tract extending northward.

Suggestions

Maritime & Heritage Visitor Centre; The tour offer an insight into the skills needed to make a handmade Carpet, which were made for famous places all over the world. You can also experience a fishing trawler wheelhouse by trying your skills in landing a boat safely into the harbour to the pier. A great was to spend a few hours.

Hidden Gems on the Edge Tour; This is the trip to go for. The cost is €30pp (2017) and well worth it as they take you to areas that the ships' vehicles can't get. It is a small coach that winds its way along the coastal road that the larger coaches cannot access. The entire trip is a delight with wonderful views and excellent commentary. An excellent alternative to the official cruise tour and less expensive. The tour starts from the information centre. Now, I suggest that you e-mail the Killybegs Tourist office before you travel and they will happily reserved seats for you and you pay on the day. It's certainly worth booking in advance if you can as this will be a very popular tour on the day.

Killybegs most shops will give a 10% discount if you produce your cruise card. There is some lovely locally made jewellery in a family run jewellers on the High Street. Sometimes there is a craft fair on the upper floor of the main hotel when ships are in town. It's free entry and the standard of the local crafts and produce is excellent.

Ringaskiddy



Ringaskiddy is a village in County Cork, Ireland. It is located on the western side of Cork Harbour, south of Cobh, and is 15 kilometres from Cork city.

There is not a lot to do in Ringaskiddy. It is the main Ferry Terminal for Cork.

You have Cobh is about 30 mins by coach and Cork or 42 by ferry. The service operates non-stop crossings between 7am - 10pm daily. The average crossing time is 5 minutes

Cork is about 30 mins away by coach. The bus service, <http://getthere.ie/ringaskiddy-cork/> has regular runs into cork. Just put in your date for timings.

Add Cobh and Cork to here.

Waterford



Waterford, a seaport in southeast Ireland, is the country's oldest city. It was founded by Vikings in 914 A.D. and parts of its ancient walled core remain.

It is a short walk to town if you berth at the town dock. There is also a berth at a village 20 minutes away.

There is so much to see in and around this town you need to do some research and decide your priorities.

Suggestions

Waterford crystal: A truly enjoyable tour. The craftsmanship and work that goes into each piece makes you appreciate the price.

Waterford Treasures Medieval Museum: If you are into history, or Ireland, or Vikings, or the interrelationship between religion, politics, power, and money, this is your museum. But it's more than a museum. It also contains not one but two historic sites. Honestly, this is as good as a historic museum gets!

Bishop's Palace: The Bishop's Palace is an elegant Georgian mansion that is now a museum. A must when you are in Waterford.

Reginald's Tower: Reginald's Tower is an architectural and historic treasure, and is a great little museum. The exhibits are clear enough for young audiences, but interesting enough to hold the attention of adult history buffs.

WALES

Holyhead



Holyhead is on the island of Anglesey and perhaps known best for being a busy ferry port. However, the town has a number of interesting attractions and is a bustling shopping and visitors area in its own right.

Suggestions

The maritime museum in Holyhead is well worth a visit where you can learn more about the 100 or so shipwrecks that have taken place in the vicinity. If you are feeling fit or want to walk off lunch 'stroll' down to South Stack Lighthouse

History buffs will be pleased to know Anglesey has a number of both historic and prehistoric sites close-by, including burial chambers at Barcloddiad Yr Gawres and a church in the sea at Porth Cwyfan! Llys Rhosyr, the site of one of the most powerful and charismatic Welsh mediaeval princes has been discovered near the village of Newborough on the South Western corner of the island.

The Snowdonia National park is on its doorstep. With the Snowdon train that takes you to the top of Wales's highest peak.

About 30 miles from Holyhead is the town of Caernarfon. Here you will find the Castle where Prince Charles was crowned Prince of Wales along with the fantastic museum of the Royal Welch Fusiliers.

Cruise Destinations

There is also one of the little trains of Wales, the Welsh Highland Railway; this starts from beneath the castle walls in historic Caernarfon to the harbour in Porthmadog. Cost £35 rtn, (2014).

Porthmadog is also home to one of the little trains of Wales, the Ffestiniog Railway, this goes from Portmadog to Blaenau Ffestiniog. Cost £21 rtn (2014).

Just south of Porthmadog is Portmeirion. Portmeirion is a popular tourist village in North Wales. It was designed in the style of an Italian village, and the hit TV series 'The Prisoner' was filmed here. Also famous for its pottery.

Milford Haven



This is a tender port. You normally get a lovely welcome and send off from the people of Wales - and the local tourist board provide free welsh cakes on departure to the sound of a harpist.

Suggestions

There are a number of shops and restaurants along the side of the marina near to where the tender arrives.

Try a visit to Pembroke Castle, Tenby and further afield Swansea and Cardiff.

THE ATLANTIC (CANARIES)

MADEIRA

Funchal



When you visit Madeira it will become clear why this destination is known as the Garden Island - it is simply awash with colour from a breath-taking display of sub-tropical plants and flowers. So it is hardly surprising that large and colourful flower markets are one of the most arresting features of Funchal, Madeira's capital.

Cruise visitors here will discover that the market town is easily walkable although, the further inland you explore, the steeper and narrower some of the streets become. Locally

made wicker furniture, lacework and tapestries all make good buys along with the ubiquitous Madeira wine.

Funchal is also the base for tours to the islands botanical gardens; the fishing village of Camara de Lobos where Churchill went to paint; Camacha, the wicker centre; the levada walks, part of an ancient irrigation system; and to Reids Hotel for traditional afternoon tea, making cruises to Madeira a must see.

Suggestions

The cruise port is right near the center of the city, but the dock is still some distance from the main oceanfront drive. Most cruise lines have shuttles to the centre of town. It's walkable, if you are inclined to walk and very able, at around half a mile away. Cabs are also readily available and are quite reasonably priced (\$5 each way, more or less).

Depending on what you want to see this is an easy DIY destination. The town is very pretty with lots of small shops. The Marina has lovely restaurants and bars.

There is an open top bus takes you quite a way around the island at a cost of €14pp. The trip takes about 1 1/2 hours. It is a hop on or off bus so you can get off any time to explore by yourself. Bus stop just along the prom that does a circular tour either blue or yellow routes. Good value and you see most of Funchal and its neighbourhoods. You go up to a super view point overlooking the town and round to Camara de Lobos which is a pretty fishing village. There are 3 different routes.

Cable car prices. If you are thinking about using the cable car then these may help. €11pp single. A combined Cable car and Monte Gardens is €16pp. (2017 prices). A taxi from the very top straight to the ship will set you back €20 - €30.

If you have never been before then the Gardens at Monte is well worth the visit. Get the shuttle bus to prom, walk east to the Cable Car station. Get a ticket to the top. If you sit facing backwards you will enjoy the splendour revealed of elevated views of Funchal and your ship in harbour. There is a nice cafe at the bottom of the gardens that offer a tasting of Madeira wine.

Now coming down, before you purchase your cable car ticket decide on how you want to get back down, walk, toboggan or cable car.

If you decide on the cable car then purchase a return and gardens combined ticket.

If you decide toboggan it is €25 for one €30 for two or €35 for three. They take your photo on the way down and you can buy it at the bottom €10, it is really easy to do. (2017 prices). If you are looking at cruise line prices then for P&O the cable car and toboggan ride in Madeira and it's £47pp. (2016)

Cruise Destinations

From where the toboggan finishes you have a choice, walk, taxi or bus. The taxis charge €25 - €30 to take you back to town. The bus is about €3, and takes you direct to the town, the taxi drivers will tell you otherwise though. (2017 prices) If walking from where the basket drops you off it is steep but not too far, about 20mins, into centre.

There is also the Botanical Gardens. These are the ones with the checkerboard gardens, the ones you see in all the pictures. There are two entrances one for buses and taxis, about half way up the garden, and one for the cable car at the very top of the garden. By Cable car, it takes two to get to these gardens. When you get off in Monte, you walk to your right and down a path which then gets you to the cable car which takes you to the Botanical gardens. If you prefer the bus it goes from the central bus station opposite the cable car entrance, or get a taxi both the bus and taxi will drop you to outside the main entrance to the gardens.

Now, if you are planning a visit. It is worth noting the Botanical Gardens are not wheelchair or pushchair friendly, it is on a steep hill, there are very small cobble stones on the pathways all around the gardens that you will find very challenging to walk round. Yes it has some flat areas but also with some very steep uneven paths, rocky in places, and the areas are not well sign posted so it was all trial and error. If you have mobility problems then there are lots of areas you cannot get access to. This is not mentioned by P&O and I take it other cruise lines..

There is no garden map available, they are dotted around the gardens and difficult to find. For our visit, which was in December, we both feel it was not worth it. The only thing there we felt was the area you see on the many photos of these gardens. Maybe it was the rain, maybe the wind or maybe it was the time of year, lots of flowers/plants passed their best date, but we both decided it is not a patch on Monte. On the plus side there is a nice cafe at the botanical side of the cable car where we had a well-earned coffee and Portuguese tart.

DIY by cable car, the cost pp was €31 rtn, (2017) including entrance fee to gardens. The Bus, No 31 or 31a, is €6pp rtn (2016). This excursion with P&O is £40pp. (2016)

However, there are many gardens in Madeira so if you have visited Monte try one of the others.

Blandys wine distillery is worth a visit if you have the time. There are three tours to choose from; 30 min, 45 min and an hour, at the end of the tour they give you a glass of the wine that they produce. There is a shop that you can buy the wine from and the bathroom facilities were very clean.

Eco City Tour charges £40 per Tukxi, (2016) for a one hour tour, and they are electric so easy on the driver. Think they seat three people.

A visit to Reids Hotel in Funchal for afternoon tea, it's a short taxi ride away from where the ship docks and taxis will be there all day! Be sure to ask for a table on the Terrace. If you go to Reids independently you can book on the Internet but ask for a table on the tea terrace - the P&O tour will sit in an inside room. Prices are (2016) P&O Tea at Reids - £48pp. Booked direct on the Terrace €35.50pp.(2018) Note: On the Terrace they have a dress code of smart casual, no shorts, no T shirts and no sports attire.

Take a private taxi tour. There will be lots of taxi drivers with lovely air conditioned cars around, a choice of routes too. A 3 hour trip should set you back around €70. Ideal if you have accessibility issues and you want to see the area.

Try a walk down the street with the painted doors. They are very cleverly done by local artists. They are in Santa Maria Street, just at the back of the cable car. Best to go early when the doors are closed as some of them are on cafe doors and you do not get the full effect when they are open.

If you are into football then a visit to the Cristiano Ronaldo's museum, The Museu CR7, showing all his trophies is worth a visit. It is not far from where the ships berth. Closed on Sundays.

Cruise Destinations

There is also a pretty good dolphin watching operator there which leaves from the port on a catamaran for a couple of hours for as little as €30 per person.

One of the best kept secrets is Porto Moniz's lava pools. It is like a giant natural swimming pool/lido and it costs just a couple of Euros to get in. There are changing facilities, toilets, sunbeds a café bar and it is a really pleasant day out. There is not much in Porto Moniz itself (I think perhaps a small aquarium and museum), just a couple of tourist shops, bars and restaurants.

The Cabo Girao Cliffs and skywalk are a highly-recommended tourist attraction of Madeira, and best of all it is absolutely free and the attraction is always open. For this either a taxi or an excursion is recommended. You can take the bus. The most useful route is the number 7 from Funchal to Ribeira Brava which stops in Câmara de Lobos and Cabo Girao. This service leaves Funchal at 9:30, gets to Cabo Girao at 10:20 and there is a return bus at 11:25. A single ticket costs €2.75 and the exact timetable can be found on the Rodoeste website

You may have heard of the Green Train of Madeira, this is located in the resort of Câmara de Lobos, about 15 mins from Funchal. It costs €7pp and you can purchase the tickets from any tourist shop. It takes about 1hr 15 min total and stops at the top of the mountain for 15/20min for you to enjoy the views.

Tour operator:

Try Strawberry World Tours & Happy World Tours

CANARIES

General

Although the Canaries gets bad press, this is mainly because some tourist do not go beyond the beach/bar areas and do not see the real country-side.

Your cruise operator will have trips going to some of the places mentioned, and if you decided to DIY it may assist in deciding where to go in the time you have there.

Fuerteventura



With its 3,000 hours of sunshine a year, Fuerteventura is the perfect place to enjoy the rays and top up a tan especially when taking into account its excellent beaches. The mix of trade winds and Atlantic Ocean swells offer the perfect mix for water sports enthusiasts, so it is no wonder that they are attracted to the island all year round. Like its near neighbours, Fuerteventura has a rugged charm found only in the bays and volcanic slopes of

the Canary Islands. However, unlike the busier islands of Tenerife and Lanzarote, Fuerteventura has managed to avoid over development and still offers a great deal of tranquillity and stark beauty.

Beaches

Corralejo, make sure you visit this amazing place with its unspoiled sand dunes, fascinating beautiful landscape and acres of clean wonderful sand. Wind and waves for water sports. It is too far to walk from the town to the sand dunes. However, the local bus system stops within easy walking distance and there are good kiosks to get lunch and refreshments.

El Cotillo Beach & Lagoons, fabulous beach, lovely safe lagoons to swim in even for children, families, couples older and young. Careful there are a few topless areas.

Gran Canaria



The tranquil harbour, verdant palm groves and excellent climate of Gran Canaria's lively capital Las Palmas delighted Christopher Columbus when he discovered it on his famous voyage of 1492.

Those same attractions now draw modern travellers keen to explore the atmospheric cobbled streets and leafy courtyards of its old quarter, Vegueta. Cruises to Grand Canaria also bring you close to Playa del Ingles, the liveliest and best-known beach in the Canaries.

Just beyond Las Palmas you can explore the stunning desert scenery of Maspalomas, or tour further afield to explore peaceful old towns like Arucas - famed for its lush banana plantations - and Teror, with its fine collection of traditional houses with intricately carved wooden balconies.

You berth in its capital, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. The terminal has a striking sail-effect canopy at its exit gate, so just head for that. There are no shuttles laid on here.

It is a 20 mins walk into town and you will pass the El Muelle, shopping centre on right as you leave port. Taxis, hoho buses are on left as you leave port. Over the road and to the left was a Sunday Market, mainly selling clothes and food, not worth the visit. Close by is the Museum of Science and Technology.

Suggestions

For town or beach stay to the right and cross the road just past the whales tail. Then to get to the beach just follow the road straight in front of you through the town to the far side and follow your nose to the sea.

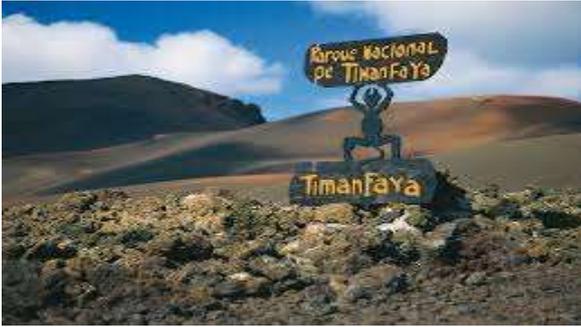
The beach itself is a long stretch of honey-colored sand that's reached via a red brick-paved promenade. So, take your towel and enjoy a laze on the sandy beach, there are plenty of places for a small lunch and beer at the beach it is lined with snack joints and tapas bars. Then you can take a short walk back to your ship and spend the afternoon sunbathing by the pool.

The huge El Muelle shopping complex opposite the port gates is worth a stroll through. Besides international shops like Benetton, C&A and Mango, it has offbeat stores like Whatever Float Your Boat and Bijou Brigitte, selling quirky goods like character teapots and craftware.

Beaches

Maspalomas beach is fantastic with some great facilities on the beach too. There is also a water park, Aqualand, there.

Lanzarote



Cruises to Lanzarote's sunny climate are a big hit with sunbathers and swimmers, who relish its volcanic red, black and white sand beaches. Make the best of your Lanzarote cruise and But tear yourself away from your sunbed to explore the island's spectacular moon-like volcanic landscape, best seen from the Fire Mountain in the Timanfaya National Park and famous for the fantastical shapes created by solidified volcanic lava.

Camel rides are available in the park, and tours here will also take you to the lush wine country of La Geria to sample the heady local vintages. Head north instead of southwest and you will discover wonderfully verdant Haria - 'the valley of a thousand palms' and can enjoy panoramic views from Mirador del Rio.

Equally fascinating is a visit to Jameos el Agua cave, an oddly shaped volcanic cave overlooking a saltwater lagoon where you will find a colony of white crabs unique to the island.

The ship will berth outside the capital. There is normally a shuttle to take you in.

There are two berths, one that you will need the shuttle to the drop off point and one a little closer, but if you are up to it then it can be walked.

If in the new part then it is a good 30 min walk from the ship to the town edge, near shuttle drop off point. So, I suggest you take the shuttle. For Saver Fare it is Adult £4pp Child £2 each way. From the shuttle drop off point it is still about 20 mins walk into the Arrecife town centre. At drop off point is a tourist information kiosk and more taxis for those DIY trips. There is a list of suggested prices for DIY trips on a board outside and also on the area map you can get. There are also taxis where the ship berths.

Suggestions

Although a lot smaller than Tenerife it has much more to offer the tourist in places to see. The majority all of these are within an hour - hour and half from the main port of Arrecife.

Walk along the front and visit the tall hotel, Hotel Gran, green in colour, and go to the bar/coffee shop on the top floor. Magnificent views and you can see the planes taking off. Nice snacks available too.

There is one of those land trains. Learn about the town's architecture, geography and history. Cost is €4pp for a 30 min tour with headphones supplied for the audio information.

Shopping

The shopping areas in Lanzarote a poor second to Tenerife. Although the capital Arrecife has a shopping area it is not up to the standards of Santa Cruz De Tenerife or Playa de Las Americas.

Puerto del Carmen There is a little more on offer in Puerto del Carmen especially in the Biosfera Shopping Centre near the old town. For shopping take a taxi and ask for the Biosfera. It is only about 15 minutes away, €20 single (2017).

It is a very family friendly resort and has a nice ambience. It stretches out along a costal road with a large pavement/prom area and is flat too. Lots of shops, bars and restaurants here too.

Places to Visit

Cesar Manrique House: Fantastic house built around a lava flow. Has wide bright rooms full of art work and a beautiful garden. Well worth seeing.

Cruise Destinations

Jameos del Agua: (Caves) - well worth the visit. Created by Cesar Manrique and so easy to explore using the subterranean walkways. Once you have paid the entrance fee you are then left to spend as long or short a time as you require and browse the cave in your leisure.

The pathway down leads you to a nightclub area that is open three nights a week, and then onto a large underground lake that holds albino crabs, after this you go through a narrow walkway along the right hand side of the lake that leads you to another small bar area and then up into the open air section. Here is the swimming pool that only the King of Spain is allowed to swim in. Steps then lead up to a terraced area with a small cafe and a Volcanic Museum.

There are plenty of opportunities for photographs and areas to sit and just take in the surroundings.

Las Cuevas de los Verdes: (Caves) - they are part of the same system as Jameos del Agua and again a must see. These are natural lava caves that you go through with a guide and this takes about 45 - 60 mins, depending on the group size. Our group was about 20 strong and this was a good size because all the explanations are done in Spanish and English and if there were any more in the group it would be more difficult to see and hear. Because these are volcanic caves you can see how the lava flowed on the side walls and they have also used lighting to emphasis the main areas. The main feature of these caves is a secret area that will be shown to you by the guide so I will not enlighten you any more on that. Again, plenty of opportunities for photos and just a small warning in places you will need to mind your head and duck to go through some of the areas. No Health and Safety here.

With both of the above they are busy and because the Las Cuervas caves have a guided tour I suggest that if you are pushed for time you do these first.

The caves are about a mile apart.

Timanfaya: (Volcano) - If you decided to include this can I suggest you try and sit on the right hand side (starboard for all you cruisers) of the coach, better views. At the end of the coach tour you can then visit the displays of heat. After which a visit to the restaurant for a drink or some food, hot food after 12 noon (cooked by the Volcano's own heat) and then a visitors shop.

Guinate Tropical Park: - a little further afield and there is lots to see here, especially for the children. Parrots, Toucan, Ostriches, Tortoise, Monkeys to name but a few. There is a Parrots show also, three times a day. Worth a visit About 1 hour from Arrecife.

Mirador Del Rio: (viewing point) - a little further along from Guinate Tropical Park with spectacular views over La Graciosa island and the entrance fee also allows you a free drink. About 1 hour from Arrecife.

Los Hervideros: The rugged coast line just along the coast from Playa Blanca. Large caves formed by the crashing of the sea. Walkways along the top and partly inside with viewing platforms.

El Golfo: (green lake) - Large lake cut off from the sea many years ago. Now turned a bright green. If you do visit and want lunch can I suggest the La Lopa restaurant, first restaurant on the right as you approach the main village. Excellent service and very reasonably priced. Can I recommend the Canerian stew and filleted catch of the day, served with Canerian Potatoes and Mojo sauce.

Yellow Submarine: This goes from a small marina just outside Puerto del Carmen. It was a little expensive, but well worth the trip. Lots to see, your own porthole, not cramped, diver outside to attract the fish.

Excursions

The P&O Camel ride & Fire Mountain Excursion. The camel ride is fun & the guides friendly. However the Fire Mountain part of the trip is very rushed and at the wrong time of day it can be very busy. Cost is £45pp.

Cruise Destinations

Beaches

The nearest beach is La Reducto, just along the front and near the Hotel Gran. Beach Umbrella and 2 loungers are €8 (2017).

Then there is Puerto del Carman and Costa Teguisse to choose from. Both easily accessed for the capital. A taxi from Arricife to Puerto del Carman €20, and Costa Teguisse is €18. Both 2017 prices.

The P&O beach transfer is £26pp this takes you to Puerto Del Carmen and you have about 4 hrs 30 mins there.

La Gomera



Lying off Africa's coast, La Gomera is an island with the shape of an orange. It enjoys a stable Mediterranean climate; warm summers, short winters; this makes it easy to explore. Having roads that are well-maintained, getting around the island is easy and comfortable for travelers; either by bus or by car. Although Spanish is La Gomera's main language, English and German are also widely understood.

Compared to other ports in Canary Islands, La Gomera port of call has a limited shopping experience to offer because of its rural setting. However, tourists with a little know-how of the island will find several shops selling unique souvenirs, which along with the whole experience in island make a good cruise stop remembrance. With most of these shops existing near La Gomera cruise port, cruise guests can enjoy a selection of local products and gift items within easy reach. Barbara's Bookstall is one of the island's frequented shops for books in the English language.

Not many cruise ship call here but there is plenty to see if you are prepared for a tour. (Try for about €80 for a 3-4 hour tour. Learn a little of the culture and of their "Whistling" which is a form of communication. A climb up to the top of the Garajonay National Park, and there are some spectacular scenery up there for you budding photographers. Tenerife is just across the bay.

Suggestions

Garajonay National Park; The park contains one of the oldest laurisilva forests on the planet, a magical place with sweeping views and dense woodland. The new viewpoint at Juego de bolas, inside the Garajonay national park is worth visiting.

Valle Gran Rey; The drive to Valle Gran Rey is extremely bendy with quite a few u bends however it is well worth the drive. The scenery was stunning & ever changing.

When arriving in Valle Gran Rey there are a couple of beaches with a promenade, numerous cafes & some really nice shops.

Bosque del Cedro; Very special experience, it is like walking in the past, very very old past. Surrounded with tall trees, it is the island's densest place. Tourists can experience a walk in the water tunnel (water can reach up to 6 inches deep so guests are advised to wear boots). Be careful, even if the rest of island is sunny, it rains here a lot.

La Palma



La Palma (the island, not to be confused with a resort in Gran Canaria with a similar name), is one of Spain's Canary Islands, off northwestern Africa. Its rugged, forested terrain is dotted with volcanoes like Teneguía and Cumbre Vieja. The island's capital, Santa Cruz de la Palma, is a port town with narrow cobbled streets and houses with wooden balconies.

The capital Santa Cruz is a pretty town and only a very short walk away from the docking area.

Berth to town, for the able bodied, it is a 15 mins walk, follow the Blue line. For the less able there is a free Shuttle laid on. 5 min ride

Just before entering Town is a tourist information kiosk. Lots of information on the town, walking routes and with one you are rewarded with a lovely view over the town towards the port from the "fortress" at the far end of town and DIY trips, also the important maps.

The town and marina area are very modern and although small has everything you need, including a Spar shop to stock up.

Suggestions

Near ship are taxis for those DIY trips.

La Palma main town is small, one busy street that will take you about an hour, depending on ability and of course stopping, from one end to the other. The street has numerous shops, tourist shops, restaurants and cafes as you walk along. At the far end is a museum inside a replica of Columbus ship, Santa Maria. If you walk behind the ship, cross the river bed by bridge and follow the road opposite, up and to the right this brings you to a view point with views over the town with your ship in the distance.

If you only do the town, from one end to the other and back can be completed in 2 hrs. My suggestion is to take a trip, organised or DIY, but take a trip.

To really see this beautiful island a full Island tour would be a good choice. There will be taxis available at the port.

There is an Observatory here, but you will need to organise this yourself before you go.

Tour Operator

For a DIY tour try - Gregorio - <http://www.taxilapalma.com/indexEN.html>

It looks like a huge company but it is just him and his wife. You have luxury travel in his air-conditioned car and his tour of the Island is down the east coast, stopping for lunch, then up the west coast and across the centre back to the harbour. About 7 hours in total, with many photo and shopping stops, €120. His English is very good.

Caldera de Taburiente National Park; If you are on this island, it is a must to visit what seems like "the top of the world". The views on a clear day are awesome, and one can see as far as the islands of Tenerife, La Gomera and El Hierro. The ride to the top is a little scary because of the windy roads, however, when you reach the top it is well worth it.

Cruise Destinations

Excursions

The 4x4 wilderness tour is recommended. You visit a volcano and have a lovely lunch.

If offered the cruise ship excursion, called 'Countryside and Wine' is a good one to opt for. A morning tour you are taken to a wine cellar for wine tasting and then onto the mountains for a Volcano visit.

Beaches

There is a nice beach not far from La Palma and a nice prom, it is pretty opposite where the ship berths. Follow the road to the right keeping the sea to your right.

Tenerife



Visiting the largest of the Canary Islands, our Tenerife cruises bring you close to one of the world's most dramatic and varied landscapes, ranging from verdant valleys and lush plantations to glorious beaches, vast pinewoods and the volcanic 'moonscape' of Mount Teide National Park.

Tenerife's cruise port Santa Cruz has grown from a fishing village to a splendid city with classy bars and restaurants, varied shops, fine architecture and interesting museums.

With our cruises to Tenerife the action begins right outside the port gates, where you will find a café-lined boulevard leading to the Plaza de Espana, at the heart of the port's main shopping area. Look out for bargain electrical goods and cut-price CDs, Tenerife's speciality.

Prefer museums and galleries? Try the Museo de Bellas Artes, which contains works by Bruegel, or discover the island's history, topography, flora and fauna at the Museo de la Naturaleza y El Hombre.

Suggestions

With Tenerife being the largest of the Canaries you will not get around everything in one visit, so when it comes to attractions it all depends on what you want from the visit.

What you need to understand is that where you berth in the north of the island the weather can be very different to that of the south. Although compared to the UK, Tenerife is warm all year round; you can expect cloud and sometimes rain in the north, even in summer, when it is normally bright sunshine all year round in the south.

So, here is a breakdown of what is on offer.

Shopping

Santa Cruz De Tenerife (Capital): The ship will berth within walking distance of the town, however, a shuttle bus is normally put on to the port entrance. The main shopping area is around the Plaza de la Candelaria. This area is pedestrianised and situated just north of main port area. On leaving the port area, when you get to the main road you need to cross over the dual carriageway and you will find the main area just to the left of the main square. The main square also houses the tourist information centre in a domed building.

If you are looking for a bargain then visit Mercado Nuestra Senora de Africa this is Santa Cruz main market, open Monday to Saturday. Sells everything from meat, fish, flowers as well has cheap CD's and DVD's and is located on Calle de San Sebastian. It is closed on Sunday but there is a flea market outside the main building.

Cruise Destinations

There is another small shopping area for those of you that like Corte de Ingles, it involves a small walk, so, on leaving the port area, when you get to the main road, turn left and follow the Promenade, keeping the road to your right, after about 20 mins, just before the Monument look to the right and you should see a grassy area with tram lines going through, cross over to the far side, over the grass and go slightly to the left and then to the right and you will find Corte de Ingles up to the left. When you leave CDI do so by the bottom corner entrance and cross directly over the road and follow the road going directly away you, this leads back to the main shopping area and also goes past the market, see above, it looks a little down and out but is quite safe.

Parque Garcia Sanabria. head straight up the main street of Calle de Castillo, when you reach the pretty square called Plaza General Weyler, turn right at the top along Avenida Venticinco de Julio and after about a 10 minutes walk you reach the park which is absolutely beautiful, full of fountains, beautiful plants and flowers and statues and all without having to pay anything.

Do not do the city tour bus at €22pp, it is the biggest waste of money and an hour and half of your time!! First view you get is a chemical plant and then it goes downhill - twice. Whilst going downhill you are nearly decapitated by tree branches as the front of bus lifts up and when clear of bus they come crashing back down.. Up one street down the other side. The worst hop on -off bus anywhere

Further Afield

Playa de Las Americas/Los Cristianos: just to see what the hype is about. About 45 miles from Santa Cruz De Tenerife. This area mainly gets bad press because of the nightlife etc.

There is normally a shuttle laid on to here, at a cost, the 2015 P&O holiday booklet DIY to Playa was £24pp return.

If you are thinking DIY to here, the distance is about 80Km. I have done a little research on Google and could not find a price for Santa Cruz - Playa, however, a taxi from the airport to Playa is €26 and a taxi from the airport to Santa Cruz is €100, total of €126 but remember that that is one way, so €252 for the round trip, you will have to do the sums against the DIY coach. Still if you are thinking about a taxi there should be plenty available where you berth. My feeling is the Coach is the better option.

The area around the Parque Santiago III hotel is excellent for shopping and dining. There are three areas worth looking at, firstly in the corridors under the hotel, then there is the area opposite the hotel and finally if you stand with the hotel behind you turn right and walk for about 300 mts there is another small shopping precinct on the right. Opposite the hotel there was a musical fountain the last time we visited, do not know if it is still running and also a crazy golf course.

Another shopping area worth a visit is C.C. Gran Sur Shopping Centre. This is a modern shopping centre on 2 levels. It is a little out of the way, near Costa Adeje, but worth the visit.

Just outside, more to North of Los Cristianos is the Eagles Park. Much smaller than Laro Parc, but still plenty to do. They have eagle shows, tropical birds, boat rides and many more other shows and walks.

Dolphins and Whales; both Playa de las Americas and Los Cristianos have harbours that offer trips to see whales and dolphins. Be warned however, nothing is guaranteed. If I remember right from our last visit the trips normal tke about 2 hours and are at regular intervals.

Waterparks; The Siam Water Park is a super way to spend a few hours if you have enough time as it's in the South of the island.

Cruise Destinations

Puerto de la Cruz: Do not get this mixed up with Santa Cruz, It is about 26 miles away, but well worth the visit. Puerto Cruz is most famous for hosting Loro Parc. This is a tropical wildlife park that has an abundance of animals including killer whales and a penguin centre that has real snow and of course a Parrot park. There is a local bus between the two places for just a few euro each. From where the ship berths it takes about 45 mins to an hour to the main bus station and then from the centre there is a free ride to Loro Parc which takes 10-15 mins. The parrot shows are on twice in the day and there is lots of animal enclosures throughout the park to look at. You will definitely need a full day if you are to see all the different shows at the park, I would advise you check out the Tenerife forum as they have lots of information.

The town of Puerto de la Cruz is very pretty in parts, much of the area around the old fishing port is full of narrow cobbled streets packed with colonial architecture. Close to the town is Jardín Botánico (Botanical gardens) with over 5,000 exotic tree and plant specimens from all over the world. Playa Jardín (Sand Beach) Puerto de la Cruz' main beach was also designed by César Manrique and is backed by extensive gardens, including a large cactus garden. To see here DIY then consider the local bus, it's easy to do and cheap, about €10pp rtn.

Palmetum of Santa Cruz de Tenerife. This is a large botanical garden that specialises in palms. The park is divided into sections and includes a large system of waterfalls, streams and ponds. It is a nice park and a good place to relax if you're out walking around Santa Cruz. There is a cafeteria at the lower end, they specialize in freshly squeezed juice. There is also a museum that explains everything about the flora and fauna found in this place. <http://palmetumtenerife.es/?lang=en>

For a DIY to here, then walk to the bus station and get a bus to Puerto de la Cruz. It is easy to do and cheap. Puerto is lovely for a wander and quite pretty. Bus about €10pp rtn. (Ships tour to same place £60pp)

La Laguna: La Laguna is the old capital. If you are thinking of visiting here the easiest way is by tram. Make your way towards the Tourist Information Centre in Puerto de la Cruz, where you can ask for a map of La Laguna. The tram stop is about 5 min away from the Tourist Information Centre. Ticket can be purchased at the tram stop. The cost is €2.50 return. English instructions are available on the machine. The trams run about every five minutes and you want the one going up the hill to La Trinidad (line 1) which is the Main Street in La Laguna. The journey takes about 35mins and there are some good views as you climb up the mountain.

In the La Laguna Tourist Information Centre they do English speaking FREE TOURS, and it was well worth having the tour, they are from Monday - Friday I believe twice a day. So, once in La Laguna face the end of the street with your back facing the end of the tram line. Go straight to the end of that road, the road crossing you is called "Calla Herradores", you turn right there and walk till the next street left into "Calla Viana", then first right again into " Antigua Calla La Carrera" or as the locals call it "Calle Obispo Rey Redondo". Make your way to the Tourist Information Centre it is a dark yellow sort of building with just a plaque on the outside.

Mount Teide; is a must. If you come up from La Laguna side (north) you will pass a visitors centre, this is worth a visit to learn the history of the Volcano. On reaching the main area of the volcano there is small café with a cable car. Now, if you want to get to the very top, firstly, as far as I know no excursion will take you to the top of Mount Teide, you will need to take the cable car as a DIY when you get there, that is an extra cost, and will you have time? Because it gets full when the main coaches arrive any time from 11am.

Guimar; South West of Santa Cruz. A collection of pyramids and visitors centre. Founded and studied by Thor Heyerdahl, Norwegian Explorer.

Food; in both Playa del las Americas and Los Cristianos the restaurants are mainly British type. However, in Los Cristianos you are still able to find some local restaurants by looking down the side streets.

Cruise Destinations

Beaches:

You can get a bus 09 to the nearest beach the stop is not far from the port, there is also a public lido called Parque Marítimo César Manrique which is about 30 mins walk along the main port. It is amazing and open to all for €3pp for the day.

The beach at Playa de las Vista is recommended, excellent sand, shallow beach with plenty of sun beds. There are many others. Manly dark sand, remember the island is volcanic.

Try Playa de las Teresitas, just North East of Santa Cruz. This is the main local beach. White sand, imported from the Sahara desert.

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN

Something to remember is that in many of the Mediterranean countries some smaller shops close in the afternoon for siesta. Also, do your research, some places are closed, even for tourists on Sunday's and Florence's main museums are closed on Monday's. I would also check out religious festival, such as Easter as well because places tend to be closed. It pays to be aware.

GIBRALTAR



Britain's love cruising to 'home from home' Mediterranean cruise port Gibraltar - and not just because it has some excellent pubs and tax free shops (good buys include glassware, china, leather goods, alcohol, perfume, silk and cashmere garments).

Gibraltar also offers wonderful views of Algeciras Bay and the Moroccan mountains from the Rock Restaurant, served by cable car from the Grand Parade.

Birdwatchers can spot more than 230 species and there are clearly marked nature trails you can follow to discover the country's flora and fauna.

The most famous 'fauna' of course, are Gibraltar's Barbary apes - get off the cable car at the halfway station to see these, then proceed to the top and hire an audio tape charting the Rock's fascinating history.

Alternatively spend a day at the beach - Catalan Bay is the prettiest, with its colourful fishing boats and excellent seafood restaurants.

You cannot miss the Rock; you will see it towering above you from the ship.

Gibraltar always gets mixed reviews. However, it has such a lot to offer. Such a proud history, lovely friendly people. Do not just think of shops, even with a half day stop you can still see some of the history, do some shopping, have a coffee in Casemates and get back to the ship on time as the Taxi drivers are so well organised.

This is an easy DIY port.

Suggestions

On arriving in Gibraltar it will become clear which way is town. You have the choice; there are shuttle taxis that charge £2 each way, you can walk to Casemates square (town) is around 10-15 minutes, but it can be VERY hot as there is no shade.

En route when you walk to town you will pass a restaurant called Gatsby's...just by there and BEFORE the chemists is a road to your left leading to Ocean Village where you will find one of the Marina's, the Dolphin Safari, the Casino and lots of bars and restaurants. This area is usually quite quiet.

Also here is the Sunborn Yacht Hotel sit out at the Aqua bar or have a lush meal in the restaurant.

Firstly we will cover the town area.

If walking or taking the shuttle when you get to some arches, it will be by the market which only sells fruit and foodstuffs. The arches in front of you will lead you into Casemates Square where there are lots of cafes and a favourite of many the Glass Factory.

Cruise Destinations

From here you can go up Main Street and see many UK shops, plus the local traders who you must barter with for good prices. There are good prices on cameras, videos, computers, jewellery etc. You will find many of the prices have been marked up. The normal serrated edge with the price on in the UK is taken off and a round sticker with the new price stuck on. Newspapers have a heavy supplement on top. e.g. TV Choice is 40p in the UK...here it is £1.50.

There is the Museum in Bomb House Lane just off Main Street down the lane by a shop called Princess Silks.

There is a Morrison's Supermarket about 20 mins walk from where the ship will berth. Follow the road until you come to a mini roundabout, turn right and keep going.

If you take the local shuttle into town, then where the shuttle drops you are the local buses, which for £1.50?, will take you to Europa Point where the lighthouse and the Mosque are. From here on a good day you can see Africa and Spain. You could also visit Catalan Bay which is quaint and has a lovely sandy beach plus restaurants. These buses do not actually go UP the Rock for that you need a taxi or tour. They will however take you to the cable car where you can go up in that.

Buses; No 1 goes to Great siege Tunnels. No 2 goes to Europa Point, No 3 goes to to Rosia Bay and No 8 to Catalan Bay. A quaint fishing village with a very picturesque beach. Also nice for a seafood lunch. Ask the driver which way he is going. All these buses are Red. The main bus stop is just before the arches leading to Casemates Square.

The leisure centre is nice on a hot day, it's within the old city walls so it very cool. It has bowling and arcades, so would be a good family day out and pretty reasonable too as walking distance from the ship (not far from Casemates) <http://www.visitgibraltar.gi/kings-bastion>

Heading out of town, on the far side of Casemates square about half way up the street you will reach the RC Cathedral which used to be a mosque!

Museum: this is near the RC Cathedral in town.

A few minutes further on there is the C of E Cathedral. By the C of E Cathedral is a small park for children.

A bit further on is the Governor's residence, called The Convent, as it used to be one.

Now, there are a number of ways, a little shorter, to get to the cable car. I suggest the more direct route is the easiest to remember. First to Casemates square, then follow the main street until you reach the Trafalgar Cemetery, the cable car is then right behind the building in front of you. It will take you right up to the very top of the Rock and also to the apes den.

There is Trafalgar cemetery where some of Nelson's crew are buried after battle of said name. It is about 10 mins walk from the town.

Opposite the cable car is Alameda Botanical Gardens and this is also worth a visit, such a diverse selection of flora and fauna and a nice little animal wildlife centre. Some animals have been rescued off the ships trafficking them.

If you feel like a wander up to the Old Town area up the Rock from the lower town many residences are the style that they used to be.

There are two boats Companies in Ocean Village that do the Dolphin trips. One boat is Yellow and one boat Blue, make sure you use the Yellow boat, much more safety conscious and newer boats. The Blue boat does not go out if weather is iffy.

Cruise Destinations

A recommended tour guide is Douglas Pitaluga Gibraltar Official tours. Excellent guide and value for money.
<http://www.gibraltarofficialtours.com/Contact-Us.html>

Now for the further afield

The local taxis operate people carriers with about six seats. They do tours up the rock and operate on a price per person basis, around €16pp Adult. This includes all entrance fees. There will be lots at the cruise terminal.

The Apes of course but take care and put your jewellery away as they have been known to snatch it. Also take care of bags too as they are naturally inquisitive.

St. Michael's caves, you need a taxi really as these are half way up the Rock although you could access them from the cable car. These are beautiful where concerts are held and water drips in through the porous rock.

Great Siege Tunnels: Again, you need a taxi, but these are handmade tunnels dug by soldiers at the time of the Great Siege 1700's. They are very interesting but a long walk for those less able to do so.

Moorish Castle: This is just the keep of the castle made by the Moors. There are fantastic views of the airport, quite funny watching as the traffic comes to a halt for a plane to land. There is also the amazing views of the city and your cruise ship.

Europa Point: You can get bus number 2 from Wall Road. This will take you to the outside of the lighthouse and also the Mosque paid for by King of Saudi Arabia.

Cruise line Excursions:

- The Secrets of the Rock: Comprised of a short minibus ride to the cable car, a trip to the top of the rock and a fascinating talk by your tour guide all about the history of Gibraltar, you are there for about 20 mins and then the guide will walk you down to St. Michaels Cave, - this cave is absolutely stunning, Next stop is the siege tunnels, where your guide will explain the how and when.
- Panoramic Gibraltar: An entertaining tour ending with tea at the Caleta hotel, where you have a delicious afternoon tea with scones that melted in your mouth.
- Wine and tapas: Very interesting, you sample 5 local wines plus tapas as they explain them to you. You are then dropped back in town with a discount voucher for the wine shop.

Beaches:

The one on the west side of the Rock is all pebbles and on the east side sandy. (**see buses**)

FRANCE

Ajaccio / Corsica



Napoleon was born here and, if you did not know that before, it would only take a few minutes after cruising into Ajaccio to cotton on as 'Boney's' name and likeness is everywhere.

The main shopping street is called Cours Napoleon and the wide tree-lined boulevards, parks and large squares in this newer part of town feature many statues of the great man, notably in the main square (ironically called *General de Gaulle*). The Old Town between the port and the imposing citadel on the cliff above boasts Napoleons House and the

cathedral where he was baptised

Corsica is such a majestic, beautiful Island. Ajaccio is the capital of Corsica and if you did not know that Napoleon was born there you will by the time you leave. With a beautiful harbour area with boats and yachts, arriving from French ports such as Marseille, Nice and Toulon; it has a lovely Mediterranean feel, wander its narrow streets and the lovely, varied architecture and fabled cathedral.

Suggestions

The ship berths just in front of some lovely bars and cafes and it is only a three minute walk into the main shopping area. No need to do anything here. The town is beautiful with shops/markets and they also have a nice beach. The tourist office is very helpful and will give you plenty of maps.

The main marketplace is right by the port and here you'll find lots of local craft goods and endless Napoleonic souvenirs. Nestling in the Bay of Ajaccio, halfway down the islands west coast, Ajaccio is an excellent base from which to explore Corsica and discover why it is called the 'Scented Isle' (because of the sweet aromas from the mountainside maquis vegetation).

There is a lovely little train, €7 (2014) that takes you around the town via a stop for photos at the statue of napoleon. You catch the little train at the docks.

In every park, and there are a few, there is free Wi-Fi. There is also free Wi-Fi in the shopping centre just outside the port.

The beach is a short walk around to the left passing the Citadel.

"Mountains and Maquis" this excursion is stunning. The scenery of the mountains and trees/flowers was fantastic and the Prunelli river gorge was just breath-taking. You stop in a restaurant for a drink and the views were amazing. The roads are a little narrow and the drop off the side of the road was immense. This wasn't an excursion for people suffering from vertigo. The contrast between the mountains and the Port of Ajaccio is really great.

Calvi / Corsica



Your first sight of Calvi will be dominated by the huge 15th century citadel overlooking the town and its cruise port (Quai Landry). Unusually, it is the new town which is nearest, with the more historic quarter up towards the citadel. This makes for a very pleasant walk with lots to see along the way, including the St-Jean-Baptiste Cathedral and the Oratoire St Antoine, before you reach the citadel itself.

Suggestions

Chapelle de Notre Dame de la Serra; Located on top of Copu di a Veta, the highest point overlooking Calvi is this small chapel. Once there it is an easy walk, there are markers on the side, BUT it is a long probably seven or eight kms away from Calvi.

Calvi Citadel; A great historical place to visit and you must have good legs to walk up and around but the view once there is amazing. It also offers a few nice restaurants. There is almost a 360 degree view on the city, the harbour and the coast.

Cannes



For once, the old town (Le Suquet) is not the first place to head for even though it is conveniently right behind the port area with the brand new Cannes cruise terminal complex.

Le Suquet boasts a medieval church and castle and narrow streets full of interesting shops and cafés but everyone really wants to stroll first along Boulevard de la Croisette. Everything that has made Cannes a haunt of the rich and famous is here: deluxe hotels, smart casinos, stylish boutiques, trendy art galleries and marinas packed with

lavishly out-fitted mega-yachts.

Suggestions

For the ultimate in people-watching, visit the Observatory of Super-Cannes which has lifts up to viewing platforms overlooking La Croisette and the rest of the resort. Nice, Monte Carlo, Antibes, Juan les Pins, St Tropez and the medieval villages of Eze and St Paul-de-Vence are also nearby.

This is a Tender port. If you decide to stay in Cannes it is an easy DIY.

Once ashore, it is a short walk to the main road. Here there is a little train doing tours, €10 for an hour (2010). The tour is very informative, showing the full town from the port down to Palm Beach, back up the shopping streets and trip around the old town and back down to the port.

The town itself is about 5-10 min walk away from where the train drops you.

There is a small beach just to the left as you reach the main road.

If you are looking at going to Monte Carlo the train station is a 15 minute walk from where the tender drops you. Trains run about every half hour from Cannes and it takes about an hour on the train.

Further afield:

Monte Carlo and **Nice** are options from this port.

Marseilles



Marseille, a port city in southern France, has been a crossroads of immigration and trade since its founding by the Phoenicians in 600 B.C.E. It's a place of tranquil squares and stepped streets, bustling 19th-century avenues and souk like markets. You will be pleasantly surprised by Marseille.

It is a long way from the ships docking port and you will need the shuttle bus from the cruise port. It will drop you off next to the Marina in Vieux Port (old port)

The old port has a lovely choice of restaurants, great choice of quality food and wine, fantastic place for people watching.

The ship's shuttle bus dropped you in the old port area.

Suggestions

It is nice for a walk around the old port. The marina is surrounded by restaurants, get there before 13:00 and the fish market is amazing, or better still, have lunch in one of the restaurants and pay a fortune for a lunch of Bouillabaisse

The petit train is worth a ride up to the Basilique Notre Dame de la Garde building on the hill. This is really spectacular and well worth going there and is a must see for all travellers going to Marseilles. The Basilique has a 360 view of the whole of Marseilles. However, get a seat at the back of the petit train if you can, the fumes from the engine can be a bit overpowering in the front. There are 2 prices one for 45 mins ride €8pp and one for 1 hr 15 mins for €10pp (2017). It includes 2 stops for picture taking.

There is also an opened topped sightseeing bus for €10pp.

Fort Saint-Jean; Either get in from the bottom from the seafront or up the steps and over the bridge. Lots of nooks and crannies to explore but it helps to have some French to understand the signs (or, I'm told, the tours) and there's lots of steps. Some good views and a decent cafe before you cross the bridge to MUSEM.

If you fancy a small boat trip the Château d'If on the island of If just outside the port is for The Count of Monte Cristo and the Man in the Iron Mask fans. Boats leave from Quay at Vieux Port and won't break the bank.

If you are looking for somewhere to eat then a local restaurant near the fish market, Local Vin Rose de Provence is recommended.

Monte Carlo/Monaco



Monte Carlo is famous for the four 'G's': the Grimaldi monarchy as well as its Grand Prix, Glamour and Gambling. The famous Grand Casino is only one of several but, if you are feeling lucky, note that it operates a strict dress code and requires all players to show passports.

The first thing you notice when you arrive is how pristine the mega-yachts look in the harbour. This only fuels the suspicion that their owners - rather than risk going to sea - actually prefer to tie-up permanently at one of the world's

most fashionable addresses.

Monaco's three main districts are all walkable from the harbour: Monaco Ville (the intriguing old town), La Condamine (business centre), and Monte Carlo (the glitzy new town). Grimaldi Prince Rainier III put Monaco on the map by marrying film star Grace Kelly in 1955 and he is now buried alongside Princess Grace in St Nicholas Cathedral in Monaco Ville.

This is normally this is a Tender port. However, if the weather is perfect (and there's no other cruise ship in port) you may be lucky and be able to berth in the marina rather than use tenders - only room from one cruise ship to do this though. This is also a doable trip from Cannes and Villefranche.

Suggestions

If visiting by train then once you get to Monte Carlo/Monaco walk out of the station and look up to your right. You will see the Palace. Just one warning I suppose, if you are planning a visit in May be prepared for the workmen building the stands etc for the Gran Prix.

Forget the cruise ship and the port, explore the real area.

It is just a lovely place to wander round, there is a road train which will take you along the coast past all the yachts to the Casinos and is very good for an overview of the town. The Royal Palace, Cathedral de Monaco where Princess Grace is buried, the famous Casino, the Oceanographic Museum and Aquarium, Jardin Exotique de Monaco. <http://www.monacotours.mc/visites.php?lg=en> This is a brilliant little train ride. You cannot get off anywhere else but it does stop for photo opportunities ie the casino.

The HOHO bus is worth it, but you may have to wait. However, you do get to see lots. By the way, this covers the whole F1 track, so why book a ships excursion.

One way to save on the leg work is by using the network of public street lifts instead of climbing the steep slopes. There are 8 free street-lifts in and around the area with one little known lift that will take you up to Monaco-Ville, the Palace & Oceanographic Museum and Aquarium. It leaves from Quai des Pecheurs car park at the old port. Now a word about the pavements (sidewalks) very narrow & the chic ladies let their little doggies poop all over them.

All the main tourist sights are down in the area of Le Port or on top of the rock except one, the Jardin Exotique which is at the top of the hill and is well worth the trouble, if you face into the port it is up on the far right. It has a wonderful cactus garden with huge cacti some with trunks like trees & 600 varieties, with a winding path giving spectacular views over area. If you think you know about cacti, visit this place & think again. Entrance fare includes some grotto caves at bottom of walk.

The Palace is up the hill to the left. The changing of the Guard takes place at noon, and there is the Princes Car Museum. There is a walk up the steps/path into a garden area behind The Monte Carlo Casino, which gives great views over the marina and then into Casino square itself. If you do want to visit the casino, not to play, if you go in the morning you can pay a small admission fee and have a look round it is an amazing building!

Cruise Destinations

However, most of the men will only want to look at the F1 track. For those that want to walk round the GP Circuit start in Casino Square outside Cafe de Paris, then a few steps down (still on the GP circuit) and you will get a grand view of the famous hairpin. Carry on down and walk through the tunnel from where you will probably get a good view of your ship at anchor in the bay. If you are lucky enough to visit during Grand Prix week, May, then it's really interesting watching them set it all up and you really can walk the course, at this time you may encounter quite a few GP drivers who are also walking around looking very relaxed.

Around the old town near the Palace there are many inexpensive and typically French restaurants up here to eat and drink and it is where the less well-off locals go. The back streets there are fascinating and all around the cathedral there are bars etc. If you are feeling rich, go to the Cafe de Paris and spend €75 on a coke, a bottle of lager and 2 ice creams and watch the endless procession of Ferraris and Maseratis go around. Do not sit in the square outside the Casinos and eat unless you are loaded. It is way too expensive. Walk up to the palace and explore the narrow streets and gardens of the old town, where a three course meal and wine won't cost an arm and a leg.

Nice



Nice, capital of the French Riviera, skirts the pebbly shores of the Baie des Anges. With vibrant markets and diverse restaurants, it's also renowned for its food.

Nice has a cosmopolitan Riviera vibe, and you'll enjoy exploring its fashionable boutiques and restaurants and sunning yourself on its popular beaches. (Just don't expect soft sand—these beaches have pebbles.) Walk up to Castle Hill for a beautiful view of the city, the Bay of Angels and of course, the bright blue water that gave the Cote d'Azur its

name.

Suggestions

Castle Hill; This is the best place to get the most amazing views of Nice. Not a strenuous walk up, but if you do not want to walk to the top, you can always get the free lift from the bottom of the hill. The lift is at the Promenade des Anglais end. The waterfall, although not well sign-posted, can be heard from well away, and is worth a visit from top or bottom, both accessible. Shops and seats all make a worthwhile visit. There is a beautiful park and play area for small children if you continue past the water fall. Great for a picnic! There is also a cafe' at the top.

Promenade; One of the best walks along the Mediterranean you will find. Beautiful Belle Epoque buildings on one side, magnificent water views on the other.

When in Nice take a helicopter ride, it takes about an hour and you fly over the principality of Monaco.

Monte Carlo and **Cannes** are options from this port.

Propriano / Corsica



Sandwiched between Sardinia and the top of Italy's boot, Propriano delivers a taste of the go-slow Mediterranean lifestyle. It's a far cry from Corsica's busiest coastal stop-offs, but the pretty marina and rolling green hills will have you reaching for your camera.

There's a tropical feel to the beaches, with white stretches of sand all around the turquoise bay. Stroll beyond the seafront promenade of cafes, and you'll see baskets swinging from cast-iron balconies on the narrow streets.

Propriano might be on the small side, but its restaurant scene is up there with the best. The waterside promenade is overflowing with eateries, all a stone's throw from the marina's bobbing masts. Our top tip is to sample the fresh seafood. The jumbo prawns and lobster are worth the trip alone.

Suggestions

Notre Dame de Misericorde; Just behind the harbour there is a flight of steps that leads to the main church in Propriano. In front of the church is a viewpoint across the town. This church has been restored a few years ago and they did a fantastic job. The statues are really beautiful and you will love all the colours. It is usually really quiet during the day.

If you're feeling active, head to the harbour to check out the water sports on offer. Scuba diving gets you up close to the marine life on the reef, or you can take a boat trip to explore the rocky headlands and hidden coves.

The beaches here have a private feel - there are more than 10 of them dotted around the tucked-away cove. The biggest is about a kilometre in length, while the more intimate sunbathing spots only have space for a handful of people.

Sete



Sete is a large, cosmopolitan town between the Etang de Thau and the Mediterranean, referred to by the locals as the Venice of Languedoc. It is the largest fishing port of the French Mediterranean coast.

The town falls into two parts - the low town, with the port, and criss-crossed by canals and bridges; and the high town on Mont St Clair. In the low town, the harbour front houses, canals and the fishing activity itself are the main attractions, along with the lovely 'village within a town' - the

Pointe Courte sector.

Tourist Office; Sète isn't exactly on the main tourist route so a stop here is a must. They are able to focus your thoughts and direct you to activities in and around the town. <http://en.tourisme-sete.com/>

Suggestions

Notre-Dame-de-la-Salette; Most people go to the Mont St-Clair for the View, but next to the first viewing deck and the building with the panoramic roof is the chapel. The chapel is very picturesque from the outside. The view of Sete and the incredible view make for awesome photos. The inside was a big surprise.

Musee de la Mer; A good museum covering the history of Sete, the port and the water jousting. Audio commentaries were provided in English which is very helpful.

Cruise Destinations

Jardin du Chateau d'eau; aka 'Parc Simone Veil' So beautiful and peaceful, with lots of opportunities for pictures, there is a pond that you can walk behind and the rock has fantastic aerated holes, really interesting place to relax and explore.

St. Raphael



Saint-Raphaël is a commune in the Var department in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region in southeastern France.

Along the famous stretch of coastline known as the French Riviera lies Saint Raphael on the Côte d'Azur, in south eastern France. Tucked in between Frejus and its more famous neighbours, St. Tropez and Cannes. It is a lively seaside resort with well-maintained beaches and a small harbour standing in the shadow of the forested hills of the Massif des Maures.

Suggestions

Basilique Notre-Dame; The basilique is the most beautiful monument in the city. You must visit it. During winter there is a music and light show on.

Jardin Bonaparte; A beautifully kept garden with plenty of seating. It is a lovely place to stroll around and look at the yachts in the harbour.

Musee Archeologique; This is brilliant and free entry. Lots of archaeological artefacts. You do need to be mobile to climb the stairs to the different floors. Climb the tower! A fantastic view awaits you. But be carefull as th bell rings very loud every hour.

Further afield are Cannes, Nice & Monte Carlo

St Tropez



St.-Tropez is a coastal town on the French Riviera, in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region of south-eastern France.

St Tropez is, quite simply, the most famous resort in Europe - and it was attracting the artistic and dissolute long before Brigitte Bardot's time.

In orthodox tourism terms (museums, monuments and similar) there's not an awful lot to do in St Tropez. The point of the place is simply to be there, to wander from the port -

where the mega-buck yachts gather - through the wriggling streets of the old town and out onto the central Place des Lices, to try your hand at boules. Later, leave the bling for the great citadel up top, and the onward walk to the unsung Graniers beach a little further along the coastal path.

A very expensive place, ladies walking small dogs, big yachts, and very steep prices at various restaurants. So, sit at a bar and watch the world go by.

Toulon



A good market, lots of cafes and bars on the harbour, a very good road train (get on the right one), lots of back streets to wander round, a reasonable shopping centre with a good lot of shops, including C&A and a supermarket usually with some good offers. Watch your pockets there are pick pockets around.

However, some feel that La Seine Sur Mer (where the ship actually berths) is nicer. An easy 15 min walk into the small town full of lovely cafes and bars. Also depending on which

day of the week a lovely market round the alleyways and small lanes in the old town.

The real question is why any of the cruise lines have decided to use this port as opposed to nearby Marseille which has more to offer and is an excellent location. If you have a relatively long port day you could rent a car and drive up to Aix en Provence.

Suggestions

If staying in town try a visit to the old town which is the historical centre, where you'll discover a market which offers a sumptuous show of local produce, the monuments, the fountains, the main squares and typical charming streets and the numbers museums.

Find the tourist information office in Toulon, its on the right in the market square. They will sell you a combined ticket for the bus and cable car, this takes you up Mont Feron. They are very helpful in there and will phone the cable car station to check it is running.

"Faron", "Cable Car" and "Toulon": three inseparable words and a not-to-be-missed outing during your stay in the city! Climb aboard this fun, red cable car - the only one of its kind on the Mediterranean coast to reach the summit of Mont Faron in less than 6 minutes. What's more, you can enjoy your day out on Toulon's most famous mountain at a very friendly rate. €7pp adult and €5.50 children, when purchased from the tourist office.

Toulon's Beaches are called "plages du Mourillon", are located 25 minutes walking from the port, you can also take the bus number 3 from the end of the port to the beaches, the bus makes 3 minutes. "Plages du Mourillon" are sandy beaches where you'll find a lot of restaurants and bars.

Further afield and well worth a visit is Sanary su Mer. A taxis there is quite cheap.

Cruise Destinations

Villefranche



This is a Tender Port. You will tender to a small harbour from where you pass through a Tourist Information Office with very helpful staff who will give you all sorts of leaflets if you want them. Sometimes there is a flea market just by the quayside. There is a little train that goes around the town but the trip is not that long.

Suggestions

It is a lovely small town with narrow streets mainly on a hill but they are very pleasant with lots of little niche shops and cafes and shade if it is that hot. Try a visit to the Citadel, no entrance fee, is worthwhile with great views over the town and small museums inside, also free.

If you want a swim, follow the road around to the right from the tender point and about 10min away is a great little beach with amenities just behind it.

An easy DIY for Monaco, Monte Carlo, Nice they are all within striking distance. The train station is about 300 yards from where the tender drops you off. Having passed through the tourist office go to the right and keep going right following the road running parallel with the sea front and you will eventually see the steps leading up to the station above the road, no more than a 10 minute stroll. The station will get very busy with lots of pushing and shoving for tickets and space on the platform. So go early and get tickets as soon as possible. Also watch out for pickpockets in all the crush. You can also get the bus at the top of the hill. Those going to Nice etc have to go back under tunnel & up more steps to other side. Ticket to Monte Carlo/Monaco €4.60 return (2013).

Monte Carlo, Nice and Cannes are options from this port.

ITALY

Amalfi



Amalfi is a town in a dramatic natural setting below steep cliffs on Italy's southwest coast. Between the 9th and 11th centuries, it was the seat of a powerful maritime republic.

If it's your first time visiting the Amalfi Coast, chances are you'll do a double-take the first time you see a roadside lemon stand. Yes, those are lemons, and yes, they are the size of your head. But despite their freakish appearance, you will grow to love these lemons because the locals use them to produce limoncello. And take it from us, there's nothing like

a glass of limoncello as you gaze out at the sea from the balcony of your hotel in Amalfi. It's pretty much perfection.

Suggestions

Fontana sant' Andrea; A popular gathering place for both locals and tourists, the fountain is hard to miss as you stand in the square in front of the Cathedral. A great spot for people watching and picture-taking, it's a convenient landmark and a good place to meet up if your group gets separated.

Torre dello Ziro; A bit of a hike, but absolutely worth it for the views. There are quite a few stairs along the way, but there are 3 or 4 vantage points that offer amazing views over Amalfi, Atrani, and the Amalfi Coast.

Luna Convento; A former convent, located overlooking Amalfi and the sea with one of the best views in town.

Salerno is just, a hour, up the road.

Capri



Capri, an island in Italy's Bay of Naples, is famed for its rugged landscape, upscale hotels and shopping, from designer fashions to limoncello and handmade leather sandals.

Luxuriant, extraordinary, and such a mild climate. Capri is a Mediterranean island of calcareous origin that has been visited over the centuries by intellectuals, artists and writers, all enthralled by its magical beauty. A mix of history, nature, worldliness, culture and events that daily blend together and bring the Legend of Capri to life; a

legend that sees no comparison anywhere in the world.

Suggestions

The Grotto's; well take your pick, Red Grotto: Blue Grotto, White Grotto, there are a few more. Whatever your preference you will need a boat trip.

Gardens of Augustus; For €1pp it is a beautiful place to visit! The views from the balconies are amazing, the only other way to get those views is from a boat tour of the island. The garden is also full of beautiful flowers and heaps of lizards.

Piazza Umberto; take the funicular ride to the top. This area has restaurants, shops, bars and tons of people - both locals and tourists. Off to the side is a great view of the bay area. An excellent spot to stop and take photos.

Cruise Destinations

Villa Lysis; Everyone should take the time to visit Villa Lysis. Even if you only go to see the view from outside you will not be disappointed. Now this is a hike from town (about thirty minutes). Also make sure it is open.

Take the little bus up towards Ana Capri and then the chair lift up the mountain, Stunning views. You can see all around the island

A little further afield are Naples and Sorrento.

I am not sure if Pompeii or Herculaneum are doable from here but in either case, you first need to get to Sorrento.

Elba



Elba is the biggest island of the Tuscan Archipelago and the third largest in Italy after Sardinia and Sicily. As soon as you step ashore in Elba's cruise harbour Portoferraio, you will feel the centuries slip away as you imagine how Napoleon felt when he arrived to start his first period in exile. Steeped in history running way back to the Romans and Etruscans - Greek mythology even has it that Jasons Argonauts came this way too - Elba has prospered ever since the medieval Medicis arrived.

You will see an imposing Medici fort, as well as a Martello Tower and second fort (Stella), looking down on you as you cruise into the harbour and then walk through the Porta a Mare archway into an old town full of cafés, bars and shops.

Touring around Elba, you will enjoy beautiful scenery and discover hidden coves and beaches. You can even take a funicular to enjoy the panoramic views from the top of 3,200ft Mount Capanne. A visit to Napoleons ornate summerhouse and gardens at San Martino will also be on your wish list.

Suggestions

Yes, this was where Napoleon was locked up for many years. But, mainly this island is all about its beaches.

Monte Capanne; also known as the "roof of the Tuscan Archipelago", is one of the highest mountains of the island (1,018 metres); it is home to many animal species and it offers a wide variety of plants and trees. Famous for the beautiful view one can enjoy from its top, Monte Capanne is particularly loved by tourists, who can reach its peak thanks to a chair lift.

Castello Del Volterraio; It is a Castle situated at the top of Volterraio; at the basis of its structure there are traces of some ancient roman walls. The castle was built to protect the island from foreign invasions and it was fortified by the Medici family.

There is a lovely beach 5 min walk from where the tenders drop you . Spaggio Ghiaie . Walk across the car park and down the tree lined avenue. Sunbed's / parasols to hire plus cafe and restaurant. Beach is stoney, like many in the Mediterranean, so beach shoes would be helpful. The water is beautiful and clear.

Cruise Destinations

Civitavecchia



Civitavecchia (the port for Rome) is quite a strange place but an interesting little town to wander around. It's a strange mix of beauty and ugliness, some streets being unkempt and badly maintained contrasting with the more modern areas which are pristine and well kept.

Suggestions

There is a nice flat promenade and the fort is well worth a visit, there is a good shopping area and an interesting market

From the shuttle drop off walk straight ahead then when you get to the little fort take the street up into town on the left, eventually it turns into a pedestrianised area, veer off at some point to the left and up some steps and you are at the market.

Visit the massive Forte Michelangelo.

North of the city at Ficoncella are the Terme Taurine baths frequented by Romans and still popular with the Civitavecchiesi. The modern name stems from the common fig plants among the various pools.

From the shuttle drop off keep walking along the sea front for around 15 minutes until you reach the train station. Get on the train to the next stop, no more than 10 mins away, Santa Marinella. There is a lovely beach here and it is less than €2 each way.

There's a waterpark at Civitavecchia, called Aquafelix... it's on the city's tourist web.

Rome



Rome, Italy's capital is a sprawling, cosmopolitan city with nearly 3,000 years of globally influential art, architecture and culture on display. Ancient ruins such as the Forum and the Colosseum evoke the power of the former Roman Empire. Vatican City, headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church, has St. Peter's Basilica and the Vatican Museums, which house masterpieces such as Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel frescoes.

Standing in the Colosseum, visiting Vatican City and tossing a coin in the Trevi Fountain are all unique experiences of a lifetime to be had in the Eternal City of Rome, reached from your Italian cruise port Civitavecchia.

Rome's breath-taking monuments, palaces, churches and classical features are quite unlike anything you will find in any other European city. They will always leave you wanting to come back for more - hence the coin-tossing, which is said to guarantee your return.

The city's other must-sees include the Spanish Steps, the Pantheon (probably the most complete ancient Roman building in the city) and the Sistine Chapel, home to Michelangelo's masterpieces.

Cruise Destinations

While steeped in history, Rome is also a modern, bustling city with designer shops and chic boutiques at every turn. Reasonably priced department stores selling all the latest fashions can be found in the many pedestrianised shopping streets, while restaurants and cafés spill out onto piazzas offering authentic Italian dishes and sensational ice cream.

First trick, all the trips start early, so order breakfast to be delivered to your room for the Rome day, 6:30 - 7 am, it is only a continental breakfast, but enough. That gives you time to get ready at your pace.

If lunch is not included then beware the cafes/restaurants in the main areas are very expensive, try one of the side streets, there are lovely little restaurants just off the Piazza Navona where a small lunch consisting of brochette with fresh tomato and basil, Margarita Pizza with a side salad and a small bottle of water, at €12 each, by contrast, an ice cream outside the coliseum costs €8+

If you are the DIY person then the train station in Civitavecchia is just outside the port on the right about a 10 minute walk. There's a tourist information kiosk at the port entrance where the port shuttle drops you and they speak good English. The cost is €4.60 each way per adult from/to any station in Rome except Termini (5 € just for this station), Toddlers go free. There is a day pass available in the station, called the BIRG ticket costing €12, which covers travel to and from Rome, and also gives you unlimited use of buses, metro, and trams (streetcars) for the entire day in Rome. You need to validate your ticket by date-stamping it in the little yellow machine on the wall before you get on the train. The journey to Rome takes just over an hour. There are two or three direct local trains each hour between Civitavecchia and Rome. Keep in mind that these are commuter trains, so in the rush hours they can be very crowded.

There are 2 train stops in Rome. First one is the Vatican (Recommended) and the second (Termini) is the centre of the city, it is about an hour to the first stop and 1h30 to Stazione Termini, second stop. You can reach all the points of interest on foot, it is an easy walk from the Vatican over the Tiber to the Pantheon, Piazza Navona, Trevi, Spanish steps, Forum, Colosseum and anything else that takes your fancy. . Or just jump on an open top bus.

On your return journey if you leave Rome at about 3.30pm you will make it back to the ship with loads of time to spare. Trains to Civitavecchia usually leave from a platform (Binario) on the right which has a separate side entrance otherwise it is several minutes' walk inside the station from the main entrance. Remember, if late the ship will not wait.

If you decide to visit Rome either as a DIY or on the Rome On Your Own tour. It is impossible to see Rome in a da and you are not going to do justice to this fantastic city on a days visit. So, go prepared, do lots of research, make a list of what you really want to see, Trevi Fountain, Coliseum, whatever you choose decide before you go and be realistic. Rome is big and the sites are quite well spread out. Rome is great! So old and so much ancient remains. It is a big city and very hot in the summer, 90C+, so dress cool, with a hat etc and make sure you take lots of water with you.

Now a word of warning, watch your purse especially around the Trevi Fountain, tradition has it that you will return to Rome if you throw coins in, of course THEY are watching where you store your purse to get your money out, jostle you and yep it's gone.

One thing to remember and it is not scaremongering, about the risks of not getting back to the ship in time. Cruise ships that dock at Civittaveccia, without fail have left passengers behind. Yes the trains and metro are easy and cheap but they do have the odd delay and strikes. So give yourselves plenty of time to return.

Cruise Destinations

Suggestions

If on an excursion then the journey takes about 1 ½ hrs by coach with a comfort stop on route, if you have forgotten to bring water the price is €2.30 here. (2010 prices) On the coach you will be given maps of Rome.

Watch out for the so called gladiators wandering about, they ask if you want a photo with them and charge you far too much, normally in excess of €20.

If you are looking for something different then try, Limous in Rome. They serve Italy's top Ports: Livorno, Civitavecchia, and Naples and take groups of up to 8 people on an excursion/tour in a private limousine at a reasonable price. <http://limousinrome.com/index.php/tours/>

If you do decide on a cruise line tour then it is worth knowing that all tours are at a brisk pace.

Some Cruise Line Tours That Cruise Members Have Taken:

'Glories of the Gladiators' Coliseum, Roman Forum, Piazza Navona. This tour is at a brisk pace. Entrance fee to Coliseum and Roman Forum is included. On reaching the Piazza Navona you have free time to do our own thing until 3:45pm. From here, both the Pantheon and Trevi Fountain are a short walk down some side streets. St Peters is a good walk, about 20 min. £50pp (2010)

'Introduction to Rome' A guided full day tour of the city with a "light lunch" included. And takes you to all the major sites inside the Vatican, Coliseum, Spanish Steps.

'Rome on your own' DIY. You are dropped off at the road next to the castle St Angelo, this is close to the Vatican City. You then make your own way to all the sites. £45pp (2016)

The sites of Rome are well spread out so you are not going to see everything in one visit. So, I would make a list of your must sees, then get a map, yes you will get one on the coach going there but by then planning will be too late. Plot what you would like to see, be realistic, on the map and work out a route. Finally remember the coach departure time back to the ship and leave enough time to get there.

The 'Essence of Rome' guided full day tour of the city with a "light lunch" included. And takes you to all the major sites inside the Vatican, Coliseum, Spanish Steps. It's a long day but you get to see so much. You have a bit of free time but not much, maybe half an hour or so.

'Roam around Rome' This one involves quite a bit of walking. You start off near the Spanish steps then walked around for quite a bit, ending up at the Piazza Navona where we had about 1.5 to 2 hours free time for lunch etc. The tour ended at St Peters where we picked up the coach back to the ship.

'3 of the best' It takes you to the Coliseum, a lovely large park at the top where you could walk easily to the Spanish Steps and the Trevi Fountain, and then to St Peter's. At each area you are left to our own devices basically with 1 hour at the Coliseum and St Peter's and 2 hours at the Park area which was more than enough time to see the Steps, the Fountain and have lunch.

If you want something different then try the 'Taste of Tuscany' trip, it is a very pleasant tour, lovely village visit and the local lunch with wine at the olive farm is absolutely lovely. Cruisers have said 'one of the best ship's tours that we have done in many years.'

La Spezia



La Spezia, at the head of the Gulf of La Spezia in the Liguria region of northern Italy, is the capital city of the province of La Spezia. Punctuating the rocky coastal poetry of western Liguria like picturesque full stops, the Cinque Terre are five hardy fishing villages that until the end of the 19th century were accessible only by sea or via steep mule tracks.

Today this protected area, which enjoys National Park status, is one of best places in Italy for a holiday that combines fresh air, spectacular scenery, good food and wine

and just the right amount of exercise - on the celebrated coast path that links the five villages.

The nearest port town and point of access for the Cinque Terre is La Spezia, a salty naval base and provincial capital with low-key charm, several good-value restaurants and some worthwhile museums.

It is not a tender port, but there is a port shuttle to the port entrance. You can turn to the left and walk along the front, there is also a little train.

Suggestions

Shopping: there are plenty of craft and antique shops in the lanes of the Cinque Terre villages. There is also free wifi all along the front.

For all those that like a walk/hike then try the Cinque Terre, footpaths that link the five towns. It is a short train journey from La Spezia to Riomaggiore, and with a bit of planning you can start walking to the subsequent villages from there. Make a note of the ships sailing time and train timings for when you need to turn back.

Porto Venere itself is a small resort and is beautiful with nice waterfront cafe / restaurants and if you walk to church on the cliff views are spectacular. You then go to either one or all of the towns, the ferry hops between each. The walk into each town varies between a few steps and steeper climbs, but you can see as you approach. There are ferry staff in each location to help. Alternatively you can just do a round trip.

Excursion

The Cinque Terre trip is worthwhile. First a coach to the furthest village, the views are beautiful, from here a boat to the next 2 villages having about 40 mins in each. Then a train to the next village, then on the train to the last village then back to the coaches. A recommended tour. With a cruise line this is about £70pp.

If you are looking at doing this at your own pace, then the ferries go from the promenade every hour to Porto Venere and then on to the 5 towns. The timetable is on line and easy to read. Tickets are on sale in the cruise terminal where shuttle drops you. They are €35 for a day roaming ticket, it is slightly cheaper to buy in the terminal but they only take cash. Or the ticket office by the ferry takes cards. The ferry is shaded downstairs and open upstairs and provides a multi-language commentary.

You can also do this by train; the train station is about 20 to 30 mins walk from the port. you buy a ticket for Cinque Terre and the trains run quite frequently. Just make sure you validate your ticket in the machine, I think at every station, I have read somewhere they charge you a on the spot fine if you don't and it's expensive.

Cruise Destinations

If you are thinking about Florence from here it is about 2 hours by car with Pisa about an hour.

Florence: There is a regional train from La Spezia Central to Florence, it is a good 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ hrs train journey with a drive of about 2 hours

Pisa: This is more doable, There is a regional train from La Spezia Centrale to Pisa San Rossore. San Rossore is the station before Pisa Centrale and is only a five minute walk from the Piazza dei Miracoli, where the tower is. If you go down this route then do not get off at the Pisa Centrale station stop because that one is definitely NOT a short five minute walk from the tower! You will have to look up timings and fares.

Livorno



Most people only think of Pisa and Florence for this port of call.

The ship normally will berth at the outer edge of a huge container port. There is nothing in walking distance; you will need the shuttle to town, this is normally free but you will have to queue to get a shuttle bus ticket.

Suggestions

It does have an indoor market and street markets. There is a huge fort with a large waterway round it, too big to call a moat and a public park. The HOHO bus visits 10 places around the town. The first bus is at 10am with a bus every hour. Last bus is 3pm. Try the Aquarium; stop 3 on the HOHO, €13pp. They have a Funicular Car up to a viewing point, stop 5 on the HOHO

Where the shuttle drops you off, go into the small shopping arcade and there is a tourist info place where they sell the tickets for a boat trip around the canals. I believe it runs every hour and lasts around 40-45 mins each trip. Livorno is a walled city and does have a lot of interesting history which is relayed to you on the trip.

For more suggestions try here: <http://www.iccruising.com/ports/europe/italy/livorno/index.html>

For the DIYer, you can buy tickets for Tuscany Bus coaches to Pisa at the tourist office near to the shuttle bus drop off. It costs €15pp return for adults, (2015). The coach leaves just outside the tourist office and drops off at the Pisa coach park which is an easy, flat walk to the Field of Miracles. The journey time Livorno to Pisa is about 40 minutes. I believe coaches leave at 10 am and midday. People will be handing out the leaflets with times when you get off the shuttle.

Or, there are normally 8 seater taxis outside the dock gates, €30 a couple to Pisa. (2015). The driver will drop you off and arrange a pick time, normally 2 hours later. On the way back he can either drop you in Livorno town for an hour or take you back to the ship. They will mix and match the passengers, so you don't have to be a party of eight - you will just join up with others.

If you are looking for something different then try, Limous in Rome. They serve Italy's top Ports: Livorno, Civitavecchia, and Naples and they take groups of up to 8 people on an excursion/tour in a private limousine at a reasonable price. <http://limousinrome.com/index.php/excursions/>

Florence and **Pisa** are options for this port.

Florence



Florence is a beautiful city; there is so much fantastic art and history. A fabulous place to visit and some think it is better than Rome.

The normal dropping off point for a coach is near Piazza Piave, there is a Tower, and from here you walk to Santa Croce square. At the end you are met here and taken back to your coach. Whatever you do, do not go directly to the drop off point, buses have been moved in the past and your guide will have the up to date information.

Take a good map with you and plan out a route, even if Florence's centre is small and entirely walkable, you'll optimize your time with a map and wear comfortable walking shoes or sneakers. Another thing to bear in mind is that most of museums are closed on Monday, including the Uffizi Gallery and Academy Museum.

If you are visiting on a Monday, try here: <http://www.visitflorence.com/florence-museums/open-on-mondays.html>

In Florence most shops are open on Sunday, especially the ones in the city centre. The San Lorenzo Market is open as well. Sunday is also a frequent day for fairs, markets or special events. For example, on the second and third Sunday of every month Piazza Santo Spirito is animated by a nice local fair/market with local products.

Suggestions

In one day it won't be easy to see much, but you can still see many things. Here are some suggestions of must-sees in Florence:

- Piazza Duomo where you can admire the beautiful Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore with the Cupola of Brunelleschi, the Baptistery and Giotto's Bell Tower.
- Via dei Calzaiuoli, a shopping street that connects Piazza Duomo to Piazza della Signoria.
- Piazza della Repubblica where you'll find nice and famous cafés where you can sit and people watch.
- In Piazza della Signoria you'll find the imposing Palazzo Vecchio and its beautiful statues and the Loggia della Signoria.
- Uffizi Gallery is next to Palazzo Vecchio. It displays unique masterpieces of the Renaissance such as the The Birth of Venus by Botticelli.
- Ponte Vecchio is certainly one of the most famous landmarks in Florence and has beautiful goldsmith shops.

These are Florence musts and maybe are enough for one day. But try and find time to visit:

- Santa Croce Church and the square
- Pitti Palace and Piazza Santo Spirito in the Oltrarno area
- Piazzale Michelangelo, called the balcony of Florence (this is a long walk, uphill all the way and many many steps, but worth every step. From here the views over the city are fantastic and you can see almost every site and building, there is also a copy of the Statue of David here. This place does get packed but there is still plenty of room to walk around, take in those views and of course the photo opportunities. For the less able the HOHO bus comes up here and there are taxis)

Sometimes (I suspect on most days) there is an outdoor market running with lots of leatherwork and great opportunities for a bit of haggling. There are some lovely back streets with ice cream parlours, coffee shops and general eateries to while away a bit of time whilst you gather your breath for more sightseeing.

Cruise Destinations

If you want to DIY then a recommended trip with P&O is: Florence On Your Own, £49pp, Adult and £40pp Child. Or, £46pp adult, £42pp child for a half day trip, (2018) Coach into the city, this took 1 ½ hrs, dropped off and taken to Santa Croc Square where you now have approx. 5 hrs to do your own thing. You are then collected from Santa Croc Square and taken back to your coach for the trip back to Livorno.

Pisa



What most people do not know is that the tourist Pisa, tower etc, is just part of quite a large town. Pisa is not a "tourist trap", it is a real city and a beautiful one. Just walk away from the Field of Miracles and you will discover a totally different and pleasant city.

The Leaning Tower is what everyone thinks of when Pisa is mentioned. However, it is only part of a collection of buildings that make up the Field of Miracles. Other buildings include the cathedral, the baptistery and the monumental

cemetery.

If you want to visit any of the attractions you need to purchase your tickets from the museum first. Outside there are many stalls selling the normal tourist stuff.

If your cruise line offers the Easy Pisa tour, this is very good. After a coach trip to Pisa you transfer to a trolley (little train) and are taken to the Field of Miracles. After a small comfort stop in a local restaurant you have a tour of the square stopping for some commentary from your guide. You are then left to do our own thing for about 1 ½ hours. Near to where you get picked up is a restaurant where you can get a nice cold drink, and then re-boarding your trolley for a tour of the town of Pisa. *For those of you who do not want lots of walking then this one is recommend. Coach to Pisa, picked up by Trolley and taken to the field of Miracles, some time on your own, back on the trolley for a small tour of the town, back to the coach and then back to the ship. If you are thinking about this, go for the morning tour, back on board by 1 pm and all afternoon to relax.*

Cruise line 'Pisa on your Own' is £38 adults, £28 children for 1/2 a day (2016)

Cruise lines do have a combined, Florence and Pisa tour. This is about 9hrs and while it may be a long day, to do both in one day makes a lot of sense. Florence and Pisa on your own is £52 adult, £49 child (2016)

Genoa



Genoa is a real Italian gem. A marvellously eclectic city, it has a secret beauty that can be found in its daring architecture, traces of splendid frescoes and imposing, noble palaces. Here you can see the house where Christopher Columbus was allegedly born and sample some of its delicious pesto, which originated from this region.

Suggestions

A bit of a mixed place, some love it and other hate it. Outside the port is a concrete motorway overpass, the buildings looked dirty and are covered with graffiti, once you get away from the port, across the busy road there is a nice typical Italian city with lovely little passageways with little shops selling all sorts of unusual things these passageways open up into a main square.

Cruise Destinations

You are able to walk along the main street from the port and there is a land train which takes in the local area for a few Euros. In the side streets across from the waterfront there are plenty of shops. The ice cream shops are wonderful and the restaurants are all good. But, beware the further you go into town the steeper the streets become.

Explore the labyrinth of narrow alleyways of the old city, which are filled with shops, and restaurants. In the centre you will come to the Piazza de Ferrari, around which is sited the Opera and the Palace of the Doges. Some of the other main sights here include the beautiful black and white striped St. Stefano Abbey and St. Lawrence Cathedral, with its bare medieval style.

One of the most charming areas of Genoa is the district of Via Garibaldi. Dating from the mid-16th century, it was designed to accommodate Mannerist palaces of the city's most eminent families, including Palazzo Rosso, which is now a museum.

It has some quite nice architecture and the aquarium is definitely worth a visit. You can get boat trips in the harbour. Try, Portofino, a great little place to spend an hour or so. Also, Santa Margarita is lovely place and has a great beach.

However, there are some run down bits.

Marina di Carrara



The dramatic white-marked mountains behind Marina di Carrara have played a key role in sculpting Italy's historic looks. What looks like snow, is in fact some of the purest marble in the world - used to build Rome's famous Pantheon and Trajan's Column. Anchoring here means you're an hour and 45 minutes' drive from Florence, which is blessed with world-class art and pretty Renaissance buildings. Pisa, meanwhile, lies just 50 minutes down the coast.

You berth in a container port and it is a long walk into town. However, shuttles are provided by the port authorities.

Suggestions

Carrara; a 20 minute drive inland, is nicknamed the Marble City. You'll see it pretty much everywhere you look, including the pavements, sculptures, fountains, and the main cathedral.

Mainly, if staying in the area this is a beach place.

Both **Florence** & **Pisa** are within travelling distance.

Naples



Cruising into the Bay of Naples is a memorable experience. The Naples port is overlooked by the imposing Sant Elmo medieval castle, high up on Vomero Hill, as well as the 13th century Castel Nuovo, which is right next to the Naples cruise terminal in the heart of the city.

The only problem with Naples is there is just so much to see and do. The Amalfi coast so beautiful though not as exciting these days, So, will it be Vesuvius, Pompeii, Herculaneum, Sorrento, Capri

There is quite a nice cruise terminal at Naples and there is a tourist information desk there.

Warning theft is rife here. Pickpockets, thieves on mopeds snatching bags. You need to be on your guard at all times.

Suggestions

There is an HOHO bus from cruise terminal. You can take the shuttle bus from just outside the port to the starting point, but it is only 5 minutes' walk away. The Red Route takes you through the city (warts and all) up to the Capodimonte museum at the top of the hill overlooking Naples and the bay. The Blue Route takes you out to where the 'better off' Neapolitans live, along the seafront past the US Embassy, the views across the Bay of Naples towards Vesuvius are to die for.

The "National Archaeological Museum of Naples" would be a good trip as it contains so much that was excavated from Pompeii.

If you want to do something different go to the tunnels underneath Naples, really interesting.

Then there are the wonderful views of Mount Vesuvius from the ship.

If you are really into history and the "Vesuvius story" fascinates you, it has to be Pompeii with a good guide. If you are just curious then visit Herculaneum for half a day and use other half to do something else.

If you have walking difficulties then seeing these sites could be difficult as the ancient roads/pavements in both Pompeii and Herculaneum are very uneven.

If you prefer DIY then try Pompeii by train, just across from the port there is a tobacco kiosk, right by a tram stop, €9 euros each. The tram takes you to the train station (within 300 yds). Or, you can walk from the dock to the train station, about 20 minutes. Taxi from port to Naples train station is approx. €10. (2015)

If you're travelling from Naples to Pompeii, take the Naples-Sorrento line and get off at Pompeii Scavi-Villa dei Misteri. The other Pompeii station lies on a different line and is closer to the amphitheatre entrance. If you are a senior citizen you do not have to pay (take ID) otherwise it was €11pp each admission. The major sites are served by the Circumvesuviana railway (081 772 2444, www.vesuviana.it). It takes 30 to 40 minutes to get to Pompeii from either Naples or Sorrento. It should cost €1.80 to €3.20.

Pompeii: They split Pompeii into different sections for tours; it is fascinating. It is a large site and you really need a full day to appreciate it. The P&O Pompeii tour is £43 each (2014) and you are confined to a very small portion of the whole site.

Herculaneum: is smaller and much better preserved, and not so much walking and you really get the feeling of the place. Entrance fee was €12pp. You catch the same train and the station that you want is Ercolano Scavi and it is only about 20 mins to get here.

Cruise Destinations

If you are thinking about the trip up Vesuvius it is not for the unfit. You actually walk up and down Vesuvius; it is a trek and a half.

Try the hydrofoil to Sorrento, they are right at the side of the ships it was really easy, it is quite cheap, they go every hour and it is about 40 minutes crossing. So, when you leave the cruise terminal the ferry terminal is 5mins walk to your left. Try for the ferry at 9am, and if offered return at 2.30pm, there is another at 4.30pm but this is a little tight for the ship leaving. The cost is €25 rtn. Plenty of seats avail and you have the option of sitting inside or out.

If you do not want another sea journey, there is a train from Naples to Sorrento only €6, you need a taxi from the port to get to the station. However, beware that it does take 1hr 15mins to travel to Sorrento, so the same coming back, make sure to leave time for cruise ship departing and it is advisable to catch the bus from railway station to ship, as it is a long way to walk.

If you want to visit Capri, the ferry and hovercraft port is very close to the where the ship docks and it's very easy to buy the correct tickets. You get off the ship, walk a couple of mins along the port (turn left at port gate) and get on one of the ferry that sail across to Capri (takes 45 mins minimum). Costs about €40 return. From the marina in Capri you could take a boat to the blue grotto or take the bus to AnaCapri, take the chairlift to Mt Solaris, stunning views. You can see all around the island. For the return journey then do not plan on getting the latest return crossing back, sometimes the ferries are unpredictable and so there is a danger of missing the ship if you have left it late.

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Sorrento and **Capri** are both options for this port.

Piombino



Piombino is an Italian town and comune of about 35,000 inhabitants in the province of Livorno. It lies on the border between the Ligurian Sea and the Tyrrhenian Sea, in front of Elba Island and at the northern side of Maremma.

Piombino is located in the final stretch of the Etruscan Coast, which ideally begins at the height of Livorno, a hundred kilometres further north. Built over the sea, Piombino has always been a naval base. Today the city's port is used for freight transport, but also as a marina.

Suggestions

Piazza Bovio; Built on a picturesque sea cliff, Piazza Bovio has a wide balcony with a stunning view over the Elba island. On clear days from the terrace you can even see the islands of Montecristo, Giglio, Capraia and Corsica. There are a number of small cafe's about. A nice place to stroll and sit and watch the world go by.

Torre di Populonia; Cheap entry, family of 4 comes to €7, and worth it! The view on top is very nice. The stairs are quite difficult to walk up especially if you are tall.

Castello di Populonia; For a small fee you can enter this great sightseeing place & enjoying the great view from the tower (or castle in general). For a little extra fee you can get the combi-ticket allowing you into the small museum 2 minutes away from the castle/tower. After that a stroll around the small village & enjoy a wine or some food in the little cute restaurant. If you are a bit dodgy on your feet, then this castle is not for you.

Portofino



Portofino is a fishing village on the Italian Riviera coastline, southeast of Genoa city. Pastel-coloured houses, high-end boutiques and seafood restaurants fringe its Piazzetta, a small cobbled square overlooking the harbour, which is lined with super-yachts.

Portofino has a stunningly attractive harbour and is one of the most photographed villages along the Italian coast and worth visiting for its unique beauty.

Suggestions

Castello Brown; Portofino unveils its full beauty from the top! Allocate enough time to climb the wonderful route heading to the castle. As you walk up, you will come across several stops for breath-taking photos.

Oratorio di Nostra Signora Assunta; If you want to take a step back in time and just be mesmerized by architecture, the church, the meaning behind it, the location, this is the location. A long steep walk to get up the hill where the church is located and not easy unless you are in decent shape.

Rapallo



Rapallo is a municipality in the province of Genoa, in Liguria, northern Italy. It is one of a string of old-fashioned seaside resorts along the eastern half of the Italian Riviera (called the Riviera di Levante) and is not far from Portofino

Bigger and busier than its neighbours, and a little less expensive. Rapallo is convenient for travellers as it is also nearer the autostrada and has more 'stopping' train services. Although it isn't the nearest resort, it is still a handy base for the Portofino promontory, with frequent

buses to Camogli, Recco, Santa Margherita and Portofino itself.

Suggestions

Castello di Rapallo; This old castle sits right on the waterfront and is nicely lit up at night. Very visible from the many restaurants along the waterfront.

Lungomare Vittorio Veneto; Right on the waterfront, the promenade stretches to the Castillo and further at one end and the Marina at the other. You can pick up your ferry boat tickets from the kiosk for trips out to Portofino, San Fruttuosa and Santa Margherita or book a tour. It can busy when boats are due to arrive/depart. Generally every half an hour from 10am. There are lots of cafes and restaurants to enjoy too. Most of the shops are in the back streets away from the waterfront.

San Michele di Pagana; Less than 15 minutes walk from Rapallo and a couple of lovely public beaches. The private beaches are cheaper than in Rapallo and a very quaint but very small town.

Take the bus from Rapallo to Portofino, €3 (2016).

Portofino is an option for this port.

Salerno



Salerno may initially seem like a bland big city, but the place has a charming, if gritty, individuality, especially around its vibrant centro storico, where medieval churches share space with neighbourhood trattorias and neon-lit wine bars. The city recently invested in various urban-regeneration programs centred on this historic neighbourhood. The tree-lined seafront promenade widely considered to be one of the most beautiful in Europe.

15 mins away.

There are normally shuttles laid on to Piazza Concordia about

Suggestions

Duomo di Salerno; The cathedral is interesting and peaceful but be prepared to be amazed by the crypt - do not walk past the discreet sign pointing down the stairs - a spectacular sight with some very interesting history and cremated remains!

Giardino della Minerva; Set on several levels this hillside garden has a historical and medical background. There are lovely views over the port of Salerno and a nice little cafe for herbal teas. You do need good shoes as there are steps to climb.

Lungomare di Salerno; A lovely walking or cycling option beside the sea. Benches all along the route so can always find somewhere to stop and sit in the shade.

San Remo



Sanremo is a coastal city in north-western Italy. It is Italy's own Monte Carlo, a sun-dappled Mediterranean resort with a casino, a clutch of ostentatious villas and lashings of Riviera-style grandeur. Known colloquially as the City of Flowers for its colourful summer blooms, San Remo also stages an annual music festival (the supposed inspiration for the Eurovision Song Contest)

Suggestions

Old Bussana; If you're visiting San Remo, Bussana Vecchia is a must see spot. This medieval village was destroyed in earthquake in 19th century and today it is the International Artist Village, a small community for hippie artists from all over Europe.

Villa Nobel; The home of Alfred Nobel who moved for health reasons from Paris to Sanremo in 1890.

Pista Ciclabile Area 24; If you are into cycling then try this. This bike trail goes on for 20+ miles through towns and natural areas, great sea views, and long tunnels too. It is a tremendous delight to go biking and see the beauty of the area beaches. You can rent bicycles in the town.

Santa Margherita



Once a quiet fishing village in the shadow of its flashier near neighbour Portofino, Santa Margherita has developed into a charming resort with its own distinct appeal. As well as the inviting cafés, restaurants and bars around the harbour, Santa Margherita is unusual for this part of the Italian coastline in having some fine, sandy beaches. You can even hire changing cabins from the beach bars. There are some fancy boutiques around the harbour and along the narrow lanes that lead from there into the pretty town. Well worth a visit are the ruins of its 15th century castle, several

Baroque-style churches, and of course, Portofino, which is just a short bus ride (or cruise) along the coast.

The resort/fishing town of Santa Margherita Ligure really couldn't be in a better neighbourhood. Fashionable but much quieter than Portofino, life in Santa Margherita Ligure centres around the lovely palm-laden harbour, where boating and simple sunning are the orders of the day. The town has some good shopping options, lovely cafes and interesting sights like its 16th-century castle and the 17th-century Basilica di Santa Margherita

Suggestions

Park of Portofino; Take the bus from Rapallo to Portofino, €3 (2016). Enjoyed a short stay in the beautiful harbour there. If you like walking the walk from Santa Margherita to Portofino, 5Km, past beautiful beaches and coves along the way. Stop for lunch at Portofino and catch the ferry back. For the more relaxed then there are water taxis to Portofino

Any hot chocolate lovers out there? Enjoy the most delicious, thick, creamy chocolate sensation overlooking the water at the inconspicuous little cafe in Santa Margherita, called *Simonetti Gelati!* After gaining energy from your drink, take a stroll along the waterfront and admire a couple of majestic churches sitting high above the streets and if you're lucky enjoy a fabulous assortment of street performers entertaining passers-by.

Add Portofino to this port.

Savona



Savona Ligurian: Sann-a is a seaport and commune in the northern Italian region of Liguria. With 60.000 inhabitants Savona is one of the biggest cities in Liguria, while Noli is a tiny village, but as an industrial town which has been heavily based on the iron industry Savona has not got the best reputation. In spite of a fabulous location locked into a sunny bay between the sea and the Ligurian Alps and other interesting places to explore.

When you have finished looking up and around you'll have plenty of time to take in the city with shops, cafes and promenades.

Suggestions

Harbour and Beach; Take a walk around the inner harbour and enjoy the sunshine and see the charming diversity between expensive yachts and old fashioned fishing boats where some are sipping champagne while others mend their nets.

Medieval Fortress and 19th Century Prison; In between the beach and the harbour you pass the Priamar fortress built in 1542 and used as a prison housing up to 500 prisoners during most of the 19th century. Pre-Roman, Roman and Byzantine traces have also been found on site, and today Priamar houses Savona's Archaeological Museum.

Cruise Destinations

Savona's Very Own Sistine Chapel; The word Sistine implies that the chapel was erected by Pope Sixtus IV who was born in Savona and wanted a mausoleum for his parents. The Savonese Cappella Sistina can be found behind the cathedral.

Ghibelline Towers; Savona skyline is marked by a few medieval towers. Most famous is La Torretta clocktower at the end of Via Paleocapa by the harbour. It was part of an old defence structure.

If the weather is warm you can go to the beach on Corso Vittorio Veneto. Savona is one of a few Italian cities offering beaches within walking distance from the city centre. And even if you can spot a railway and some factories in the distance the beach facilities look clean and inviting.

Sorrento



Perched on top of a craggy cliff along Italy's Amalfi Coast, Sorrento presents a dramatic face to visitors from the sea but once you reach the centre - either by foot or, less strenuously, by minibus from the Sorrento's cruise tender dock (Marina Piccola) - it is a different story.

This is a charming resort town which really knows how to welcome tourists. Service always comes with a smile in the shops, cafés and restaurants around its pretty piazzas and you will also discover some fascinating buildings including a

15th century cathedral and the 14th century Correale Palace. Jewellery stores galore and plenty of designer labels in fancy boutiques make this an exciting place for shopaholics, too.

Just wander through the shops here. Limoncello of course is the main theme in most of the shops and so colourful with lovely displays.

Suggestions

Duomo dei San Filippo e Giacomo; The Cathedral is relatively plain outside, but once you enter it is a completely different kettle of fish. It very highly decorated inside with a decorated roof with large inset paintings. There are lots of side chapels with statues and lots of candelabra.

Limonoro; Highly recommend in Sorrento, Italy Best place for limoncello, meloncello, biscuits, cookies, cappuccino cookies, chocolate balls, cream liqueur. Lots of samples to try.

Piazza Tasso; Lined by restaurants and leading to the shopping areas of Sorrento, this is a must visit part of the area with its bustling mix of tourists and locals.

The tour to Sorrento is fun with its hair-raising drive, stopping for coffee at Sorrento, Amalfi, Positano and Ravello. For those of a worrying nature, sit on the seats away from the edge of the cliffs.

If you are really into history and the "Vesuvius story" fascinates you, it has to be Pompeii with a good guide. If you are just curious then visit Herculaneum for half a day and use other half to do something else.

If you have walking difficulties then seeing these sites could be difficult as the ancient roads/pavements in both Pompeii and Herculaneum are very uneven.

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If you do not want another sea journey, there is a train from Sorrento to Naples only €6. However, beware that it does take 1hr 15mins to travel to Naples, so the same coming back, make sure to leave time for cruise ship departing.

You can also take the hydrofoil to Capri. Take the little bus up towards Ana Capri and then the chair lift up the mountain, Stunning views. You can see all around the island

Naples and **Capri** are options for this port.

MALTA

Malta is not a very big island so it is quite possible to see much of it in a day.

Valletta



It's a lovely sail into the Grand Harbour in Valletta with excellent views of the city from every vantage point. Your ship berths right in the city and the Grand Harbour is at the doorstep of most cruise liners: a fifteen-minute walk to Valletta. There are a lot of cobbles and steps in the old town - pretty difficult with a wheelchair I should imagine.

Due to its small size, quite a lot can be seen in a day stopover. You should have a lovely day out without spending a fortune, lots of easy walking and picture opportunities.

Definitely drop into the tourist office they have loads of stuff.

If you are flying into here and want to get to the port quickly and with no fuss. It costs €15 for a taxi to the Cruise Terminal. There is no taxi queue as such; you have to pay at the kiosk inside the terminal. The taxi driver will be at the kiosk.

Suggestions

Outside the port gates there is the usual offer of a HoHo bus at €10 per person and waiting taxi drivers offering tours of the island along with horse drawn carriages with prices varying from €40 - €75 - so worth a bit of a haggle!

Cruise Destinations

There is a modern lift to get you to the battlements and saves a lot of uphill walking. Once you get off the ship, walk to the right past all the HOHO buses, cross over the road and walk until you see a gap where there is a modern lift. The high speed lift cost just €1 each return for adults and children are free. The lift scales the city walls and delivers you right into the historic city by the Upper Barrakka Gardens. You exit into a beautiful flower lined square with monuments and fountains and viewing platforms to look down over the city and our ship below. By the way, they fire the cannon with a ceremony, every day at midday. Apart from the lift you could walk, quite steep, or ride in a pony and trap up to the town. In the main square on the hour there is a musical fountain.

Walking through the gardens brings you into Valletta. It's a very small city and very walkable. A must, if you like churches & history, is the St John Co-Cathedral. Quite plain outside but serious bling when you get in. You get a talkie headset to guide you round. Then there is the Mosta Dome, the history of the building is fascinating. Also, the 'Palace of the Grand Masters' is certainly worth the visit. In the War Museum (which is well worth a visit) is the last of the trio of Gladiators - 'Faith'.

From the Upper Barrakka Gardens, it's a short walk to the War HQ Tunnels. For €15pp you have a tremendous tour of the tunnels, guided by WW1 re-enactors, which lasts the best part of two hours. It's pretty tiring, and a long walk with nowhere to rest. Well worth it, though, if you don't have any mobility issues. And apparently only about 10% of the tunnels have been renovated and opened to the public, so by the time they open the rest a full tour is likely to take a whole day!

For first time visitors - "Malta Experience" is a must and only just down the road from the cruise terminal.

Another option is the HOHO bus. 2 routes, red or blue. Red takes you around the island to Medina and other old towns. Very interesting. The blue route takes round the harbour and the blue grotto.

You can also visit the Popeye village, the water park and swim with dolphins. There is a very large market on Sundays in the centre of Valletta at the bus station.

From the ship, if you walk across the hill to the other side of Valletta (maybe 10 minutes) there is a ferry across to Sliema. Takes 15 minutes to cross and leaves every half an hour €2.60pp return. They have a new shopping centre in Sliema claiming to be Malta's largest. It's called The Pointe and is located very close to the Fortina Spa Resort and is about a 5/10 minute walk from the ferry.

You could also head for the bus station in Valletta and take the local bus to Sliema. At the bus station in Valletta you go through the main bus station, down the hill and round to the left for the Sliema bus. The fare is €2 each way. Watch when you get off as Sliema is not listed on the bus moving signage. Look out for the M & S shop, or Captain Morgan's bright red boats. From there take a 2 hour harbour cruise which is a great way to see round the Grand Harbour. €13pp. The cruise boats are across the road.

Book a guided tour to the Three Cities (Vittoriosa, Senglea and Cospicua) or to the "silent city" of Mdina. There is also the Crafts Village in Ta' Qali to visit. If you get the time take a bus to Marsaxlokk - it is a beautiful fishing village with restaurants on the quayside selling great fish and chips!

For the more adventurous try the helicopter trip around the island. Book it through Malta Air Trips. You will fly to Gozo and then back round Malta. The pilot is knowledgeable about wartime stories etc. One of the highlights was flying back over the Grand Harbour and buzzing the ships.

On a non-alcoholic note - there is an ice cream place (with bakery attached) near M&S which does orange cheesecake ice cream - delicious.

SARDINIA

Alghero



Alghero is a city on the northwest coast of Sardinia, Italy. Encircled by ancient walls, it's known for its cobblestoned old centre.

It is one of Sardinia's most beautiful medieval cities. Alghero is the main resort in the northwest. Although largely given over to tourism the town has not given up its unique character and it retains a proud and independent spirit.

It has car free narrow lanes. The old town contains numerous bars and cafes with excellent seafood. A very nice town, with some very nice beaches not far from the harbour.

There is a road train,

Suggestions

Cathedral of Santa Maria: Not to be missed. It has a beautiful, calm atmosphere.

Chiesa di San Francesco: It is worthwhile to take a break and visit the Franciscan Church. It is relatively plain as far as churches go, in accordance with the Franciscans pledge of poverty.

Trips include the beaches at La Pelosa - Stintino, the abandoned mining town of Argentiera and the ancient palace complex at Nuraghe di Palmavera.

Cagliari



Cagliari, the capital of the province and the region, is located at the heart of the beautiful Bay of the Angels. Like Rome, it was built on seven hills, which identify the historic neighbourhoods of the city.

Visually stunning, Cagliari can trace its history back thousands of years to Roman times and features many museums, historic churches and ancient artefacts. Most of the city's impressive attractions can be seen just by walking through the walled Castello area with its winding alleyways and open piazzas. Try not to miss the 2nd Century Roman amphitheatre and the colourful botanical gardens featuring 500 different plants. There is a lively covered market every weekday and Saturdays just north of the Castello and you will be spoilt for choice with restaurants in the marina area, with fish and seafood a speciality. There are numerous bars, pizzerias, and ice cream stalls along the seafront.

When you get to the dock gate there are buses/tours/taxis etc waiting.

Suggestions

The Cittadella dei Musei; deserves a visit. Formed by a wide central court, it is surrounded by buildings housing the city's best artistic and historical collections: the National Archaeology Museum.

Also outside the Castello Quarter; Cagliari is crawling with intriguing sites and sights, such as the Amphitheatre and the Roman Villa of Tigellio; the Necropolis of Tuvixeddu, hundreds of tombs dating between the 6th Century B.C. and the 1st A.D.; the Grotta della Vipera (Viper's Cave) and the Basilica of San Saturnino, important testimony to the High Middle Ages, founded 5th-6th Centuries.

Cruise Destinations

Monte Urpinu; This mountain has amazing view to Cagliari and surrounding cities. You can see old military base, salt lakes, "lakes" with flamingos and city with all of the famous parts of it. Next to it there is shady park where you can spend some time after enjoying view.

Torre dell'Elefante; scale the wooden staircases to have a fantastic view (especially of the port area) of Cagliari. You should also consider the other Tower of San Pancrazio which has a better view of the inner city.

San Pancrazio Tower; is an impressive historic tower, full of history, just like its twin tower Torre d'Elefante. Worth a visit strolling along old Castello.

One of Italy's top botanic gardens can be found in Cagliari. It includes caves where ferns are grown, a collection of Mediterranean and tropical plants, and Carthaginian and Roman remains.

Beaches

For water lovers, the Province of Cagliari is the perfect vacation spot, thanks to its beautiful beaches: it is worth remembering, among others Tuerredda, Poetto and Porto Piscinni Beaches, as well as those around Villasimius, Costa Rei and Santa Margherita di Pula, all well-known and well-equipped tourist resorts.

If you are thinking of Poetto Beach, the P&O to Poetto beach transfer is £47pp (2018). That gets you there and a sunbed at the beach lido.

Olbia



Sardinia's northeast coast is an earthly paradise of shimmering reefs, coves and bays. The main port of Olbia is often overlooked as crowds rush to the glittering Costa Smeralda, a millionaire's playground for those looking to indulge in La Dolce Vita lifestyle.

Olbia is a port and airport town in the north-eastern corner of the island of Sardinia. The town has a long history, and although nowadays it is mostly seen as a transit town for travellers arriving in or leaving Sardinia, Olbia has enough

charms to merit some attention in its own right. Olbia (meaning 'happy' in Greek) brings much to smile about. The glorious sandy beaches are less crowded for a start and its bustling historic centre is refreshingly authentic, packed with boutiques, bars and sun-dappled piazzas.

Olbia has one or two important sights within the town, and its small historic core is a pleasant place to amble and to sit at a restaurant or bar. The town isn't expensive, and it makes a good base for a day or two - perhaps longer, if you are planning to take a boat trip, visit beaches or explore nearby sights. If you are travelling to or from Olbia Airport, it is certainly worth considering spending a few hours in the town itself.

While The Tomb of the Giants and Sa Testa Sacred Well are nods to the city's ancient past, explore the granite hewn Basilica di San Simplicio and Castle for fine standing examples of medieval architecture.

Olbia is the gateway to the beautiful pearly white beaches of the northeast coast and the glittering Costa Smeralda.

Suggestions

Basilica di San Simplicio; Olbia's top sight is this medieval Pisan-Romanesque church, hewn out of Galluran granite.

National Archaeological Museum of Olbia; Right on Olbia's waterfront you can find The National Archaeological Museum. The museum exhibits various object dating back to the Romans like ship fragments.

Cruise Destinations

Fortezza di Monte Altura; Just outside Palau you can find Fortezza di Monte Altura. This fortress has seen many wars, but has yet remained intact. From the fortress you will have a stunning view over Palau, Corsica and La Maddalena.

The tomb of the giants on Mont'e S'Abbe Olbia; Well worth a visit in combination with other archaeological sites very close.

SICILY

Catania



Catania is an ancient port city on Sicily's east coast. It sits at the foot of Mt. Etna, an active volcano with trails leading up to the summit. The city's wide central square, Piazza del Duomo, features the whimsical Fontana dell'Elefante statue and richly decorated Catania Cathedral. In the southwest corner of the square, La Pescheria weekday fish market is a rowdy spectacle surrounded by seafood restaurants.

The majority of cruisers say, take an excursion or DIY to either Mount Etna or Taormina. Depending on how

adventurous you are and how long you are in port.

Suggestions

Anfiteatro Romano, Roman Amphitheatres. Right on the Piazza Stesicoro, along the Via Etnea between the University and the Via Bellini are the remains of the Roman Amphitheatre (Anfiteatro) of Catania. The strangest thing about this theatre is that the entrance is through the front door of what looks like a small museum (not recognizable at all) in a busy traffic street. Once inside there is a ticket booth and when you walk on through the house, there is this Roman amphitheatre in its backyard!

Piazza Duomo; A perfect place to meet or just enjoy the relaxed atmosphere of Catania. Take time to walk over to the elephant in the middle of the square and, with your back to the cathedral, look to the right. There you will see elephants on the building - indication of the ruling family at the time it was built. Take the train ride from the side of the cathedral around the town since you will be taken to areas that you would not consider safe to walk alone in and also to see where people actually live.

Monastero dei Benedettini; You will have to climb to the highest point in Catania to visit this unexpected gem. The beautiful monastery is well worth a visit. There are guided tours every hour and one in English at 2pm.

Visit Taormina; is a beautiful town overlooking the Ionian Sea with plenty of places to visit. At the north end of the main street is the Greek (later roman) theatre, there are great views of Mount Etna, depending on the weather, from the seats. There are some beautiful gardens, they do take some finding, but they are worth it. The town should promote this on the tourist maps and ships port guides. It has some interesting features and beautiful views back down over the bay.

Monte Etna; Visiting Etna is a fascinating and unique opportunity for most people travelling to Sicily and should not be missed.

If you're shopping for souvenirs, Taormina might be a better choice than Catania as it has a large number of shops concentrated on a few streets, though Catania offers Via Etnea. The city has a number of restaurants but they're not easy to find. Catania is certainly worth seeing - at least for a brief visit. The two large street markets are particularly interesting, and the churches and palaces have a distinctly Baroque aura.

Giardini-Naxos



Giardini Naxos is a seaside resort strung along a wide bay below the famous mountainside resort Taormina on the eastern coast of Sicily. Its setting is picturesque, and although the little town is not particularly elegant or exciting, it's a cheery place in the tourist season, with superb views of Taormina and the Sicilian hills.

Most of what Giardini Naxos has to offer can be seen by taking a stroll along the long seafront road. Here you can book a boat trip, relax on the sand, rent your own boat, admire the views, swim or enjoy a meal at one of the many sea-view restaurants. Look out for a couple of Roman granite columns, which were discovered in the sea nearby. Most of the tourist businesses are at the southern end of the town, where you'll find a cluster of hotels and Giardini Naxos's widest stretch of beach. Here you'll find a choice of nicely-presented beach establishments where you can rent sunbeds or eat at the attached restaurants and bars.

Suggestions

Lido Bonday Beach; Excellent chairs and umbrella are for hire. Friendly staff (English spoken). Quality food, moderate prices. Try their coffee-flavoured granito-cream! No loud music. Boat trips offered from the sea.

Lido Europa; Nice beach with great view of the sea and all the cruise ships stopping nearby. This beach has many restaurants and shops. This is not the sandy types of beach

However, most people head for Toarmina

Messina Strait



The Strait of Messina is a funnel-shaped arm of sea that connects the Ionian Sea in the south to the Tyrrhenian Sea to the north and runs between the island of Sicily and mainland Italy, within the central Mediterranean.

The strait is characterized by strong tidal currents that established a unique marine ecosystem. A natural whirlpool in the Northern portion of the strait has been linked to the Greek legend of Scylla and Charybdis. In some circumstances, the mirage of Fata Morgana can be observed

when looking at Sicily from Calabria.

You may get a glimpse of Mount Etna, as it rises above the Island of Sicily. Also, keep a look out for the Stromboli Volcano, just north of the Strait. This is a very active Volcano that spurts fire on a regular basis it is spectacular watching the lava bursting up from the caldera whilst lightning was flashing all around it. Great photo opportunities, especially at night.

Messina



it was boring and dirty.

A port with mixed reviews. You can walk into Messina and get a road train around the city. Be careful, the road beside the port is just terrible. However, some people who walked into Messina were NOT impressed!

As you leave the port area, beware of roadside sellers, taxis, further on beware of tourist bus tickets sellers, they are very insistent.

A town of mixed reviews, some have enjoyed whilst other say

Suggestions

You exit the port straight into the town and only a short distance from the Cathedral with its animated clock tower which has a daily show at noon and is most probably the highlight of Messina. It is very amusing and well worth it.

There are also the botanic gardens and the aquarium; these are quite small and cost €3 each.

There is a church up on the hill with great views, lovely strolls along the front.

The majority of cruisers say, take an excursion or DIY to either Mount Etna or Taormina. Depending on how adventurous you are and how long you are in port.

Taormina is a beautiful town overlooking the Ionian Sea with plenty of places to visit. At the north end of the main street is the Greek (later roman) theatre, there are great views of Mount Etna, depending on the weather, from the seats. It is a short trip up the road, 30 miles away.

If you are thinking about DIY then the train station in Messina is only about a 10-minute walk from the ship, it is approximately an hour train ride along the coast, train is €8pp rtn (2016) you get off at Taormina -Giardina which is outside Taormina town and then get a bus from there (run irregularly) up to the town centre (It's a good 30-40 min walk uphill). Then a taxi up to the town centre from Taormina train station can cost around €15 -€20 but are limited in numbers. One of the best and quickest ways is get a local bus direct from Messina to Taormina. The train and bus will take you around an 1hr to get there. However, beware that public transport is not that regular and if on a Sunday it is non-existent.

Taxis are also available in Messina. However, some passengers have said that the drivers try and con you. Some will not give a firm price for the trip, and once in Taormina drivers then want to wait to take you back, charging you for the entire time you are out with him.

Some Cruise lines also lay on a DIY trip here.

Excursions

If you do this on a tour then you normally have lunch on the Terrace at the Hotel Villa Angela. (Hotel owned by Simple Minds Jim Kerr)

Another trip you may be interested in is to Mount Etna this is fascinating. It is a long walk and in summer it could be 30 degree + heat? Some people found the ships tour rushed.

Some cruise lines offer a vineyard and wine tasting trip which people have said they thoroughly enjoyed. It is in the foothills of Etna and the views, on a good day, are stunning.

The Godfathers' Footsteps is really good. Cruise line price is £44pp. (2017)

Palermo



The capital of Sicily, Palermo perches at the foot of Monte Pellegrino at the heart of a large natural harbour. It has enjoyed and endured one of the most colourful histories of any Mediterranean city. Greeks, Romans, Carthaginians, Arabs, Goths, Vandals have all come and gone, leaving their mark on the population as well as the architecture.

Despite being a lively modern city where the million inhabitants going about their daily business with the traditional Italian mix of style, noise and organised

confusion, there is history at every turn from the Arab-Norman artistry of the fabulous, mosaic-laden Palazzo dei Normanni to the Capuchin Catacombs full of Palermitans mummified by the Capuchin monks.

Some say nicer than Messina. There are vents from the Volcano which come out into the sea and it is always interesting to see the sea bubbling as you sail in. Many years ago seafarers were known to jump off their ships in terror.

Suggestions

Some advice, always protect bags & cameras from pickpockets, if you are going into Palermo also make sure that you leave any valuables/jewellery on the ship in your safe. It has been known for tourists to have their chains ripped off their neck on the main street in the city centre. This has been known to happen from time to time according to police and sometimes it is not a lone person so please be careful.

Just outside Palermo is Monreale with its lavishly decorated cathedral one of the world's ten most visited monuments.

Mt Etna from Palermo; Mt Etna tourism is quite popular, even though visiting the volcano can be dangerous. Unlike the "dead" volcanoes that often make great postcard shots, there is nothing dead about Mt Etna.

Palermo's Museums and Palaces; Among all of the attractions in Palermo, the palaces and museum stand shoulder to shoulder with the cathedrals and markets as must-see destinations. A large part of the thrill has to do with the layers of Sicilian culture that have their roots in Palermo. The port city has seen empires rise and fall, kings come and go, and artists emerge and retreat.

Taormina



Taormina is a hilltop town on the east coast of Sicily. It sits near Mount Etna, an active volcano with trails leading to the summit.

You anchor in the beautiful bay of Giardini Naxos for the port of Taormina. Normally there is a shuttle bus laid on running up to Taormina. The journey time around 20 mins.

Suggestions

There are some beautiful gardens, they do take some finding, but they are worth it. The town should promote this on the tourist maps and ships port guides. It has some interesting features and beautiful views back down over the bay.

Giardini della Villa Comunale; This a small tranquil park with interesting war memorials. The panoramic views are wonderful.

Cruise Destinations

Greek Theatre; A fantastic site with amazing views across the bay to mighty Mt. Etna smoking gently away.

Corso Umberto; A very nice pedestrian street filled with great stores and good restaurants. A tourist trap by all means, but it is an excellent and colourful trap.

Trapani



Trapani is a city in western Sicily with a crescent-shaped coastline.

The elongated scythe like form of Trapani, as it curves elegantly into the sea.

The ship docks right in the centre of town and you are literally a couple of hundred yards from the historic bits.

Suggestions

The main tourist attraction near Trapani is the fortified medieval town of Erice which sits on top of a mountain, you cannot miss it! You can take a ships excursion or go yourself as there is a cable car from Trapani to the mountain top. Erice can be cold and windy if the mountain is wearing a cap of cloud so if you are adventurous you could try something else on a cloudy day.

Erice; The journey starts with a cable car trip from Trapani, €9 return.(2016) It has medieval appearances and there are nice walks around the pebbled roads. There are plenty of cafeterias, restaurants and patisseries where to feast your eyes and fill the belly with exquisite Trepanise cuisine.

Grotte Mangiapane; A really nice excursion, free from the commercial, touristy trimmings that you find elsewhere. The settlement has been tastefully converted into a rural life museum.

SPAIN

Alicante



Built around a natural harbour, the main city and cruise port on Spain's Costa Blanca, Alicante, is also a top beach resort in its own right. It has a sophisticated Mediterranean feel with its restored old town adding to its charm and the attraction of its sandy beaches. Dubbed the 'City of Light' when founded by the Romans, Alicante is still a relaxing place to walk around.

Down from the impressive Castillo de Santa Barbara fortress, which offers impressive views across the city, most

activity centres in the streets around the Ayuntamiento, a plaza area buzzing with restaurants and tapas bars. There are also many cafés along the seafront.

Works by artists including Dali, Miro and Picasso are on show at the Museo de Arte Siglo and there is also an archaeological museum.

Suggestions

The waterfront/harbour area is a very pleasant walk with plenty of eating places and they do get very busy. A visit to the castle is very interesting and also there is an excellent cafe at the top and the marina is good for a quiet stroll or watching the world go by.

Cruise Destinations

The Castillo de Santa Barbara; is interesting and has some great views. There is a lift up to the castle which you access through a hole in the cliff below. Walk from the port to your right, (beach on your right), where there is a footbridge over the road. Cross the road there (stay on the same level) and you will see a tunnel in the cliff. Walk through the tunnel to the lift up to the castle, it is a return ticket and I think it is €3, there is a ticket machine near the entrance to the tunnel. It is worth a visit even if you just go for the view. There is a cafe up there too. It is sign posted Castillo de Santa Barbara. You can always walk down if you like. You only pay for the lift; there is no admission charge for the castle

There is an excellent tram service that runs from Alicante all the way to Valencia via Benidorm (with a change at Benidorm). Have you thought of going to Benidorm, the old town is just stunning.

St. Juan beach and Grand Alicante beaches are very good and not over populated in summer.

Almeria



Almería is a city in Andalusia, Spain, situated in the southeast of Spain on the Mediterranean Sea.

The Costa de Almeria's rugged coastline is laced with huge sweeps of sand and hidden coves. And, because this is one of the least developed Costas, the beaches here all come with plenty of elbow room. In Roquetas de Mar, the sands have beachside cafés and water sports on tap, but venture a little further afield and you'll find empty stretches with just the seagulls for company.

The coast east of Almería in eastern Andalucía is perhaps the last section of Spain's Mediterranean coast where you can have a beach to yourself. This is Spain's sunniest region - even in late March it can be warm enough to strip off and take in the rays.

Suggestions

Monumental Ensemble of La Alcazaba; The Alcazaba shouldn't be missed. It is really interesting. It is quite extensive as over the centuries there have been a many additions so there's a lot to see. It is perched high up and there are great views from the top.

Mini Hollywood; the mini Hollywood has so much to do, you won't be bored. The zoo is a decent size with a couple of animals (from each species) and there is a great place to eat. There is also a water park.

Barcelona



Catalonian capital of Barcelona provides a vivid mix of ancient and modern but is probably best known for the bizarre Art Nouveau architecture of Antonio Gaudi, in particular the iconic Sagrada Familia, Europe's most extraordinary - and still unfinished - cathedral.

Boosted by hosting the Olympic Games in 1992, Barcelona's Old Port area has been transformed into a thriving area of cafés and restaurants. From there, it is an easy stroll up the famous Rambla to the old town. Las Ramblas is thronged with

street entertainers, stalls and bars and is most lively at night and weekends. Not to be missed is the La Boqueria food market with its extraordinary displays of fish, meat, fruit and vegetables.

Some of the best food in Spain can be found in the city - paella is a speciality - and the restaurant Cal Pep was recently named as one of the top 50 places to eat in the world.

Suggestions

There is so much to see in the city; you need to decide what you want to see first. The great thing about Barcelona, a lot of Western Med cruises stop here, so if you are planning another Med Cruise, you can see more of the city the next time.

Warning - Barcelona have the most devious street criminals, they work in gangs - even use small children.

The ship berths a fair way from the main city. There are a few ways into town, if eligible there is the free ships shuttle, you can walk but it is about 2.5 miles, taxi, port taxis charge a €15 premium on top of the meter fare. There is now a service bus, T3 Port Bus on the front, from where the ship berths to St Columbus at bottom of Las Ramblas. €2 single €3 return, it seems to run all day when ships are in, frequent service. The shuttle or bus will drop you off at the World Trade Centre which is at the bottom of Las Ramblas about 10 mins walk from the Christopher Columbus monument. Once at the monument stand with your back to the sea and Las Ramblas is across the square in front of you.

Now before you go any further did you know that you can go to the top of the Christopher Columbus column? It is approx. €6pp, the lift accommodates 4 pax and the lift attendant, and you can actually feel it moving at the top! Fabulous views all around the city and Las Ramblas. Close to the bottom of the Ramblas is Port Vell, which is a marina with bars and shops and a huge aquarium. There is also a cable car close by.

HOHO buses are well worth the few Euros it costs to use, three routes colour coded plus they include headphones to listen to on board commentary. The Red open top tour buses stops right by the drop off point of the shuttle buses. One thing to think about, Barcelona in the height of summer is very very hot and the traffic is horrendous. So if up on top wear a hat and take plenty of water, you are going to feel the heat.

Download the maps at <http://mobile.city-sightseeing.com/tour.aspx?tourid=126>

Taxis are not too expensive if you wanted to use them to get from one place to another, however see above, and the Metro works really well too.

For the Metro: A very short walk up Las Ramblas you will see on the left the entrance to the Metro (a red M on a white background). Firstly you will need cash to get your tickets, there are no staff kiosks it is all automated but don't worry there is an English option. You can purchase an all-day travel ticket which was €7.90pp (2013) same price for adults and children. When you first go through the barriers the ticket does take a while to register so don't worry if you don't get it back immediately after the first use though it is very quick.

Cruise Destinations

Taxis are an affordable alternative to public transport. A 15 minutes journey will only cost about €15.00. Licensed Taxis have to charge you the amount displayed on the meter. However if you are carrying extra luggage there may be a small surcharge. Rates will be displayed inside the cab. Tipping is welcomed but not required. If you wish to give a tip give 5 to 10% of the Taxi fare. Official Barcelona Taxis are yellow and black and a green illuminated light on the top of the Taxi indicates that it's available for hire.

The Rambles is the main street that everyone heads for. This is fascinating with its street entertainers, shops, bars and restaurants. When you get to the top of the Ramblas turn to your right, that leads to El Cortes Ingles and if you go to the top floor the views are stunning. Also a visit to the Boqueria Market (halfway up Las Ramblas on the left) is a definitely a must-see.

The La Sagrada Familia: gets very busy with long queues waiting to go inside. If you do want to enter there are different admission fees depending on what you want to do. However, it is just beautiful to walk around the outside to see the fascinating contrast between the original Gaudi part at the front and the more modern architecture at the back.

A visit to Park Guell is amazing; it does get very busy with tourist buses and school trips but it is still worth a visit. The park is split into two areas. The Monumental Park is small, but there is a larger park around it. Allow about 2 hours. The Monumental Park opens at 10am and costs €8pp (2015). The rule is you can enter at your given time only and can stay as long as you like, but when you leave you cannot re-enter, tickets are checked. After opening only 400 visitors can enter every 30 mins. There is some beautiful architecture and quirky areas in there and it shows how Gaudi thought and built, worth a visit. If you take the Metro or HOHO bus there is a 20 minute steepish uphill walk from the Metro to the park. If you are worried about getting back then there are normally loads of taxis outside the gates.

Visits to Nou Camp, the HOHO bus stops outside you can tour the stadium and then get back on the bus after your visit. These buses can be picked up at the bottom of Las Ramblas. If all you want to do is go to the Stadium then the metro is quicker and much cheaper. Get on at Drassanes (over the road from the Columbus monument where the cruise ship shuttles drop off) get the S2 green line and get off at Les Corts. It's a short 5 min walk from there.

There are plenty of beaches within a short walk of Christopher Columbus Column. Nova Icaria, Bogatell, Mar Bella and Barceloneta are all beaches in Barcelona which have restaurant and café lined promenades.

Further afield:

A trip to the spectacularly beautiful Benedictine monk mountain retreat of Montserrat Monastery is a must. The cable car ride up the mountain is simply spectacular.

You could go to Sitges, only 20mins on the train, €9 return from Barcelona Sants station.

Cartagena



An ancient city with a name to match - it was founded more than 2,200 years ago by Carthaginian leader Hasdrubal - Cartagena is now one of Spain's busiest commercial centres. Step ashore here, though, and you are immediately aware of its rich history. In fact, you see it even as you cruise towards the harbour as this is flanked by towering fortresses. Then, in the centre of the old town, you will find the original Carthaginian castle and sections of the old city walls.

But Cartagena is also a city which moves with the times hence the new harbour front development which includes the unique National Museum of Underwater Archaeology. As part of Murcia province, Cartagena cruise port is also an excellent base for visiting the city of Murcia itself and its distinctive Baroque cathedral; the 17th century religious sanctuary of Fuensanta; the Fortress at Lorca Taller del Tiempo; the spa resort of Balneario de Archena; and for touring into the mountainous interior or along the Costa Blanca to Alicante.

Suggestions

Generally the ship berths close to town. It is a nice town to wander around, do a little shopping and find a great little place where the locals drank and eat. The tapas are fabulous.

When you get off the ship go to the information booth on the dock side then take a gentle walk, to the centre. On the way are several life size statues which are fun to look at.

In town visit the Museum and Roman Theatre, a ticket costs €6pp (2014), you start in the museum and walk through the history of the theatre this leads you through passages and into the roman theatre where you are free to wander around at your leisure. After leaving here wandered the back streets and make your way up to the castle and gardens from here you have great views over the town and your cruise ship in the harbour below. If you want to visit the castle then it is €4.25pp (2014).

Another way of getting to the gardens is by the panoramic lift, €2pp to the top. At the top of the lift you get out onto a viewing platform with some limited views over the city, however across the passageway, open to the elements and you need a head for heights, you come to the gardens.

Now with the attractions you can combine tickets so if you are thinking about 4 museums the cost is €12pp, 5 museums is €15.

There is a Tourist Bus equipped with audio guides in various languages. It takes in the whole city from ancient Cartagena with its walls, buildings and archaeological remains to modernist Cartagena, a 30-minute journey departing from Paseo Alfonso XII just outside the port area.

There is a Tourist Boat. 60 min trip around the entire port area followed by Curra and Navidad lighthouses, Algameca Chica and Escombreras island. It goes from the Alfonso XII dock and is priced at individual: 5.75 euros, Reduced: 4.75 euros (2013)

For a meal the La Catedral is highly recommended. Not far from the port, right next to the Roman Amphitheatre. The restaurant is built over the remains of the Roman cathedral, and the staff will give you a guided tour, and are very passionate about the history. Has a glass floor to view foundations and even Roman remains in the toilet! Not open Monday.

Ceuta



Across the water from Gibraltar, Ceuta (pronounced they-OO-tuh) is a tiny Spanish territory that sits on the tip of Morocco.

As you arrive at this ancient port, you can't miss 500-year-old Royal Walls rising from the sea. These fortifications are a favourite attraction with visitors, and the first hint that you're in for plenty of interesting architecture and history as you stroll around this compact city.

Along the main street, Calle Camoens, designer shops sit beside historic buildings, including the Casa de los Dragones. Just look up to see these creatures taking flight above your head. The palm-lined streets are distinctly Spanish in style, and there are plenty of tapas bars if you're feeling peckish. Must-see moments include the medieval Arab Baths, the 15th century Cathedral of Saint Mary of the Assumption and the Parroquia de Santa Maria de Africa, which has beautiful stained glass. But Ceuta also has a contemporary side, exemplified by the Mediterranean Maritime Park. This spectacular leisure attraction invites you to dive into its blue saltwater lakes and sunbathe in the botanical gardens.

Suggestions

El Conjunto Monumental de las Murallas Reales; This was the borderline of ancient Ceuta. A must site to visit with great views of Ceuta and the Rock of Gibraltar from this fort.

Parque Maritimo del Mediterraneo is a park with three artificial salt water lakes filled with water filtered directly from the sea. These are used as swimming pools during the summer months. Surrounding the pools are beautiful gardens and sunbathing areas. Scattered throughout the park are small restaurants, bars and refreshment stands. In the centre of the complex stands a "castle" that is a casino. A wonderful place to spend a relaxing time during your visit whether you use the swimming area or the casino or both.

Casa de los Dragones; This casa is on the main shopping street which is pedestrian friendly. Careful, you can walk right by and miss it. Heading up the street keep your eyes on the left. Great free photo opp.

Ciudadela (Menorca)



Ciudadella is a town and a municipality in the western end of Menorca, one of the Balearic Islands. It is one of the two primary cities in the island.

Ciudadella, is an historic town that has held up well to the pressure of tourism in the twentieth century. It was originally named by the Carthagians, who called it Jamma, and was the original capital of Menorca until the British came along and moved it to Mahon in the eighteenth century. But Ciudadella still remains the religious capital of Menorca.

Suggestions

Cathedral Ciudadela; a beautiful building which is well worth looking at the entrance fee also includes a convent which is also worth a look.

Puerto de Ciudadela; Great place to chill and watch the world go by. Plenty of bars and quality seafood restaurants.

Faro Cap d'Artruix; More than a lighthouse, it's a bar, coffee stop, cafe, restaurant, landmark, unusual tranquil spot which even if you go just for a drink is well worth it. Sitting outside looking out to sea watching the boats in the shadow of this old landmark is delightful, if you are nearby, pay a visit!

Cruise Destinations

Puerto de Ciudadela; Wonderful centre to stroll around and explore by day or night.

The Arches; Lovely buildings to wonder through though perhaps not the best bit of town - still worth a stroll.

Caves de Cala Morell; Lots of caves to explore, and free. Worth stopping if you are in the area. It's like going back in time but make sure you wear sensible shoes - flip flops won't do. Not only are the caves themselves fascinating but it's an interesting walk.

Beaches

Playas de Algaiarens; A nice red-sand beach and ideal for families with kids.

Cala Turqueta; Safe, clean beach stunning scenery.

Cala Es Talaier; A truly gorgeous cove with the most turquoise, clear water you usually only see in the Caribbean.

Ibiza



Ibiza is one of the Balearic Islands in the Mediterranean Sea. It's well-known for the lively nightlife scene in Ibiza Town and Sant Antoni, where major European nightclubs have summer outposts. However, it is also home to quiet villages, yoga retreats and beaches,

You are sure to enjoy exploring the Old Quarter of its charming capital, Ibiza Town, with its 16th century citadel and fortifications rising steeply from the harbour and the Gothic Catalan cathedral, which doubles as a museum, while

contemporary art is on display at the Museu d'Art Contemporani.

There are more stylish designs on display in the chic fashion boutiques in the lower town where you will also find numerous restaurants, cafés and bars.

If you just want to flop, head for the nearby family-friendly beaches at La Salinas and Es Cavellet. Another option is to hop on the ferry for the hour's journey to the unspoilt sandy beaches on the neighbouring island of Formentera.

Suggestions

Castle of Ibiza; The views from the top of the castle are really lovely and this is a good walk so I thoroughly recommend it for a lazy afternoon - go at siesta time so it's quiet and you can soak in the tranquillity and beauty! Well worth it.

Catedral de Ibiza; The walk up to the cathedral is steep in places but the view from the top is amazing & definitely makes it worthwhile, there's also plenty of places to stop along the way so it's not too difficult!

But remember that Ibiza is known for its beaches.

Beaches

Cala Comte; A lovely beach, can get a bit crowded as it is so popular

Cala Bassa; This beach has it all: Turquoise water, trees, large covered wooden platforms to have a meal or lie down and great lounge music from a bar close by. The place is not that big.

Playa Cala Llonga; This beach is wonderful, very clean. You can hire sun loungers and parasols here. There is a playground for younger children at one end of the beach and there are plenty of restaurants and shops nearby if you need food and drink. The sea is very clear and blue and spotlessly clean.

Malaga



A gateway to so many Andalucian attractions and Costa del Sol resorts, Spanish cruise port Malaga stands out in its own right as a vibrant destination with its own unique character. This second city of Andalucia has many Moorish influences, seen at their best in the stunning Alcazaba. Built on the site of a Roman fortress between the 8th and 11th Centuries, the castle's huge walls and fortified gates ensure a grand entrance. Inside, a restored Roman amphitheatre now acts as an outdoor entertainment centre.

Immediately behind the Alcazaba and rising high above the city with spectacular views, are the ruins of the 14th century Moorish castle, Gibralfaro. Malaga-born Picasso is recognised with a history of the artist's life at the city's fascinating Picasso Foundation. The city of Malaga waits just beyond the gates of the port and you can explore the Old Town on foot.

Great place for shopping and the new Centre Pompidou area and beach are lovely, easily reachable on foot from the dock entrance. When you exit the dock you can walk straight into the city centre - aim for the cathedral and you can't go wrong. If taking the short shuttle bus ride it is an easy walk into the city and from here a short walk to the Gothic Cathedral, the Roman theatre, Gibralfaro Castle and Arab Palace which gives you great views over the city.

Malaga is clean, you feel safe mooching around there, and it has beautiful gardens and amazing historical sites, very easy to DIY This place has a lot to offer, it just needs a little planning.

Suggestions

You will dock at Muelle Uno with an array of shops, bars and restaurants. Close to there is the Malaga Eye where you can get a bird's eye view of the city. There is an automobile museum which is very interesting close to the port.

There is an HOHO bus from the bus station, a few metres from where the shuttle drops you off. It takes in most of the important sites.

To gain entrance to many of the sites cash is required as they have machines to purchase your tickets which don't accept cards. The best value found was to purchase a joint ticket for the castle and Alcazaba (the Arab Palace) it cost about €8 per adult and €3 per child.

Gibralfaro Castle: If you want to get to the Castillo de Gibraltar the cheapest and easiest is to get the number 35 bus from the big avenue next to the marina (other side of the linear park, port side of the road). 1.30 euros each way! The castle is superb, great views over the port and city and up the coast. You can either walk down a steep paved path back down to the port or the city, or wait for the next bus, they are every hour but beware the 2 hour gap from 2.30 to 4.30, and also the bus will get full very quickly.

Or, you can first walk through some beautiful gardens with mosaic seating, fountains, statues, orange trees and palm trees. A lovely cool place to stroll through near to the sea. A word of warning the walk to the castle is steep but absolutely, definitely worth the effort. The castle is amazing, you can walk along the walls and again will get some amazing views and there was a small museum and a little cafe too. You will see some stunning views out to sea and across Malaga including a great view of the bullring. When you reach the top there is a small kiosk selling ice creams, water snacks etc next to the entrance to the castle.

Cruise Destinations

The Arab Palace: Retrace your steps down the hill to visit the Alcazaba. If you enjoy looking around historical places these two are definitely for you another amazing castle, remarkably intact and loads to see. As you leave the castle turn immediately right and walk along the side of the entrance building and you will get a great view of the Roman theatre, the ticket does not give you access to it but you can see plenty of it from inside and just outside the castle.

Coming back down the steps turn right walk straight ahead past a number of restaurants on your left, keep going to the traffic lights and turn left you are now in the square where Picasso's birth place is. Here you will find Museo Picasso, the city's most prestigious museum it houses works that Palo Picasso kept for himself or gave to his family.

In Malaga the main shopping street is in the Historic Quarter with fantastic boutiques. Make sure you do your shopping before 1.30pm as many close for their traditional Spanish siesta.

If you are looking to laze your time away then the nearest beach is; Playa de la Malagueta. The beach is well served by bars and cafes but the sand is of mediocre quality and the view of the port is a bit of an eyesore. Playa de las Acacias is the nearest good beach. It is approximately 5km, east, from Malagueta beach.

Further afield:

Granada is 1½ hours away to the north by road and bus services are frequent.

Aqualand Torremolinos this is a Big family-focused water park with lots of slides, rapids & a surf beach area with wave machine. About 20K from Malaga port. For a DIY you will have to do your sums. Royal Caribbean charge, £60pp, (2016) family of 3 £180. A taxi from port to park will set you back about, €96 return, then you have entrance fee, booking on-line is €26 Adult and €17 Child. €28, €19 respectfully on the day, (2016), 2 adults and 1 child comes to €69 (€75). So, yes you will save a little, maybe about £30 - £50.

The other option is taxi from port to railway station then the train (metro) to Torremolinos, then a walk of about 20mins uphill to the park, suggest another taxi and then the entrance fee. The costs of train and taxis to and from the park is a little research for you .

There is also a train service along the coast to Torremolinos, Belemadina, and Fuengirola from Malaga Centro. The trains' destination is Fuengirola.

Mallorca (Majorca)



Mallorca is the largest and most densely populated of the four Islands (Mallorca, Menorca, Ibiza and Formentera) which form the Spanish Balearic Islands in the Mediterranean Sea, east of mainland Spain.

A popular tourist destination for many years, the Island is currently voted a top holiday favourite for travellers. It has much to offer but sometimes you will need to get out and about from its main city and capital Palma.

Your ship will berth a fair way from the city of Palma.

Suggestion

If you want to see the real Mallorca you either need to book trips or hire a car. For those contemplating hiring a car, the roads are excellent. There have been a lot of new ones built and also many of the roads have been resurfaced.

The scenic coast road between Palma, Port D'Andratrix, Valdemossa, Deia then onto Soller is fantastic for its views. Along the way there are many stopping places to admire the many views over the coast and then onto Valdemossa and Deia. Valdemossa is one of the favourite destinations of tourists who are more into tranquillity and quiet relaxation and because of this it is very touristy, from their past you have Chopin, the French romantic novelist George Sands and of course up to date Michael Douglas & Catherine Zeta-Jones have a home here as well. Deia is the burial place of Robert Graves, a famous writer and poet.

When in Soller have a relaxing lunch in the main square. If you have the time the trolley train to Port Soller is a must.

Between Palma and Soller is Jardin de Alfabia. These gardens are well worth the visit and are situated just before the southern end of the Palma - Soller tunnel.

The Soller train ride, either Palma to Soller or the reverse is great. Wooden coaches with fantastic views. Not to be confused with the Soller - Porta Soller train.

Another place to visit depending on time is Port De Pollenca, again stopping on the way to admire the views. A quick stop at the viewing point north of Port De Pollenca then onto the Lighthouse at Cap De Formentor, with views across the water towards Menorca, worth the drive, but it is not for the faint hearted. Be warned, a small bottle of water in the café costs €2.50.

Felantix is a small town towards the north but more famous for a visit to Sant Salvador Monastery, a very twisty drive up but the views across Mallorca and towards the coast, especially Porto Colom is breath taking.

Everyone goes on about the Coves of Drac. Very large lots to see, a guided tour and a chance at the end to take a boat across the lake towards the exit, but no photography allowed. However, in my opinion the Caves of Artá are something different and do not disappoint. Beautiful caves, excellent lighting, very good English speaking guide, along with German, Dutch and Spanish, and you could take photographs. The exit out was towards the sea. These caves may be out of the way but are worth the visit.

It is suggested that you give the Festival Village a miss. This is Majorca's equivalent to our Outlet Villages, Without too much detail what a waste of time, in some shops prices more expensive than in Palma and the whole area was very quiet.

However, a visit to Mallorca cannot pass without seeing Palma.

Palma



Dominated by its iconic Gothic cathedral, the Majorcan capital and cruise port Palma has been transformed in recent years into one of the most sophisticated hotspots of the Mediterranean. Fine shops rub shoulders with authentic Balearic restaurants and tapas bars in this easy to navigate city.

From the harbour filled with expensive yachts, wander up to the magnificent cathedral and stand in awe when you realise it took 500 years to complete. Spreading out around this ancient structure with its impressive views is a collection of side streets and alleys which give a sense of the city's cultural past and Moorish influences.

Suggestions

A shuttle is required to get into the main area. Most coaches drop off, opposite the Cathedral, I believe it is called Escullera - It is near the entrance to the Marina just south and across a very busy dual carriageway from the Cathedral. It is very easy to cross road - just remember to look left first.

You can take a taxi to the cathedral which cost €11 (2015) one way the maximum number of passengers is four.

The Red Route Hop On Hop Off bus has a pick up outside the port.

You can walk from the cruise terminal into town via the promenade that skirts the marina in about 30 - 40 minutes however that feels a lot longer in the heat.

If you do not have a map then, once you are dropped off and you have crossed the busy main road, go half left towards the steps leading up to the Cathedral and just before those steps there is a tourist office.

The cathedral is a spectacular sight which dominates the city's skyline. Palma is a gorgeous city filled with tree lined avenues and numerous squares with pavement cafés. It's like a less crowded Barcelona with some great shopping opportunities. The cafe at the top of the main shopping street has a lovely courtyard garden with a fountain at the rear and you can enjoy a glass or two of red in the warm sunshine.

Arab Baths; Some people still refer to these as the Roman Baths. Follow the signs in the old town, not far from the cathedral. There is a TV with a brief description running in English, German and Spanish and a small sunny quiet garden with seats and a lemon tree dripping with lemons. Only €2.50pp and worth a visit.

It is worth knowing that the streets behind the Cathedral are a rabbit warren and it is easy to lose track of time and direction. Take care and have your street map handy, if in doubt there is always a sign somewhere pointing to the Cathedral.

Start with a visit to the Royal Palace, entrance just opposite the Cathedral, next must be the Cathedral, then onto the Museum that displays a superb collection of prehistoric artefacts. You can purchase a joint ticket for the Palace and the museum.

After the culture, a walk around town and a little shopping. If you are looking for exclusive shops try Passeig Des Bonn and Avinguda Jaume III. For those who want to know, Palma has two Corte de Ingles. In the streets there are plenty of shops, restaurants and tapas bars.

Cruise Destinations

There is HOHO bus stop just to the west of the Cathedral, on Avinguda D' Antoni Maura and it completes a fairly extensive tour of Palma, including Bellver Castle, worth a visit with an excellent photo opportunity of Palma and the bay. The hop-on/off bus cost €18 for adults for 24 hours. It's half-price for over-65s, but you need to show your passport. (2017)

For beaches you have a choice. West of Palma are the beaches of Cala Major, 3Km by taxi about €10 or a good 30 mins walk and Palma Nova, 12 KM by taxi about €20 . East of Palma is the beach of Playa de Palma, 20 Km by taxi about €15. Both Playa de Palma and Palma Nova are very crowded with tourists, restaurants and bars. It is suggested that you stick to the Palma Nova beaches either side of Santa Lucia Hotel.

Further afield:

If you decided to remain close to the ship there is a shopping centre fairly close to the port. Out onto the busy dual carriageway, cross over and turn left. Follow the road keeping the dual carriageway on your left.

Mehon (Menorca)



Mahon is a municipality and has been the capital of Menorca, since the British moved it from Ciutadella in 1721. The reason being the harbour at 5 km long, over 1 km at its widest point and 15-30m deep it is one of the largest natural harbours in the world. This coupled with It's location in the Mediterranean, has made it a strategic stronghold for many nations throughout history.

The port itself is relaxing by day and buzzing by night. The bars and restaurants along the portside come alive at night it is easy to spend many hours down in the port, watching the ships, admiring the view, enjoying the hospitality of the restaurants, or just sat taking in the atmosphere.

Suggestions

Faro de Favaritx; Wow, what a fantastic place. The scenery was truly stunning. Whatever the weather a great place to visit.

La Mola de Menorca; Great fort with quite a history. No cafe so take food and water! There is a good walk to the head where there is a big gun. Enjoy the views!

Esglesia de Santa Maria; Definitely worth a visit while you are in town. The architecture of the building is outstanding (be sure to look UP). The stained glass windows are extraordinary. Cost €2pp.

Palamos



Palamós is a town and municipality in the Mediterranean Costa Brava. Fringed with a ribbon of sun-kissed sands, Palamos started life as a tiny fishing village.

Head down to the beach, or leave the town behind for a day of discovery.

Barcelona is about 1 hr 30 mins away.

Suggestions

Take a trip to nearby Figueres; about an hour away. This is the birthplace of Salvador Dali and home to the Dali Museum, one of the most-visited Spanish museums. Not surprisingly, it is the place for the lovers of fine art. On the outside, it's a vision of red studded walls topped with huge luminous eggs. Inside, you'll find an amazing collection of Dali's surrealist paintings and sculptures

Beaches

La Cala S'Alguer; Beautiful little cove with some quaint seaside houses/glorified beach huts. Rocky so good for snorkelling but if the locals are there it feels like you're intruding a bit!

Platja de Castell; Great family beach perfect for non-swimmers and large enough to accommodate a couple of thousand people.

Puerto Banus



Puerto José Banús, more commonly known as Puerto Banús is a marina located in the area of Nueva Andalucía, to the southwest of Marbella, Spain.

Puerto Banus has fast become a mix of jet set playground, combined with hen and stag party hang out. Here you can while away hours sipping a cocktail in the port watching the super rich on their luxury yachts and the Ferraris and Lamborghinis drive by.

Suggestions

Puerto Banus Marina; You cannot visit without going to this port. It's a place to see and be seen. The array of expensive cars and yachts parked and moored side by side in this basically small area is unbelievable.

Marina Banus Shopping Centre; Lovely for a stroll and a casual shop around.

Alameda Park (Marbella); Alameda park is in Marbella's centre, and if you just feel like having a short break take one of the beautiful benches there and sit down. Watch the people, and all the beautiful flowers and plants from the park.

Malaga is about an hour up the coast.

Roses



Roses is essentially a Mediterranean town with a notable tourist and seafaring tradition. Located in a unique natural environment in the northern area of the Costa Brava, it is less than 30 km from the French border, 65 km from Girona and 160 km from Barcelona. The Airport at Girona is just 1 hour drive from the resort.

Roses origins date back to the eighth century BC with the arrival of the Greeks. Roses is a modern town, which is culturally active and with proud traditions. The town has

prospered since the middle of the 20th century, and boasts excellent shopping, restaurants, bars, beaches, nightlife and sporting facilities.

Suggestions

Citadel; If you have any interest in history, then this location has plenty to offer, from Greeks, through Romans, Visigoths and on. Nicely presented with plenty of interpretation on the returnable guide sheets. At €4pp and free for children, this may be a nice stop if you are passionate about ancient cultures and ruins.

Roses historic centre; Wander around the uneven streets of the historic centre of Roses. It has plenty of little shops and restaurants, and all of this running parallel to the seaside.

Tarragona



Almost everything of interest in Tarragona (and there's lots of it) lies conveniently within the old city walls at the town's medieval heart, with its maze of cobbled lanes and cathedral. The main street, Las Ramblas, leads to a belvedere called the *Balcón de Europa* from which to enjoy spectacular views.

Tarragona is a port city in north eastern Spain's Catalonia region. Many ancient ruins remain from its time as Tarraco, under the Romans. The *Amfiteatre Romà* is a 2nd-century arena facing the Mediterranean, and traces of the forum

stand among the alleys of the walled, medieval Old Town. A walkway along the ramparts, the *Passeig Arqueològic*, has sweeping views of the city.

After all that culture, take time to tempt your tastebuds with a spot of Catalan cuisine. Tuck into tapas in the *Rambla Nova*, the main boulevard. Or, if seafood is more your thing, *El Serrallo*, round the harbour, specialises in the freshest seafood cuisine. You will be delighted to hear Tarragona is also known for its fine wines, especially the sparkling delights of Cava.

Suggestions

Mediterranean Balcony; Great views. Situated at the end of the *Rambla Nova*. Restaurants and cafes nearby - worth a stroll along.

Roman Circus; This is worth going to if you have a love of history. You can go down through the tunnels and see where the chariots and horses were kept and imagine what it would have been like long ago.

Cruise Destinations

Parc de l'Amfiteatre; Largely rebuilt, some parts original. The history here is really cool and you can walk in the middle of the amphitheatre; feel what it was like for those in competition a thousand years ago. Easy to see highlight in the heart of Tarragona. Free admission as part of your ticket to the National Archelological Museum if you want to get up close. If you don't want to pay you can get a good overview from the fence line.

Murallas de Tarragona; This is a pleasant relatively short walk through well maintained landscaped grounds that follow the old town wall. There is an access charge - but is reasonable.

Valencia



Vibrant Valencia, Spain's third-largest city is a popular and picturesque resort known for its pavement cafes, parties (Las Fallas) and paella. Amongst art and architecture you can see plazas, palaces, churches and cathedrals, before heading to one of the city's white sandy beaches to cool off.

The old city is a great place to begin and offers a superb selection of sights and landmarks. Valencia Cathedral displays 3 magnificent portals; one Baroque, one Romanesque and one Gothic. Once inside you can climb the octagonal

Miguelete Bell Tower to see sweeping views then from here navigate the narrow streets to the Plaza del Ayuntamiento, the Museo de Belles Artes or the towers of Torres de Serranos.

In the new town wander wide balmy avenues and simply observe and enjoy the Mediterranean way of life. More recent additions to the city include the aesthetically stunning and ultramodern 'City of Arts and Sciences' with its fantastically shaped soaring glass palaces.

The ship berths a fair way from the city, so you will need the shuttle bus to get you into town. The shuttle drops you off near the Torres de Serranos, you need the shuttle, it is a good 20 mins by coach, from ship to city.

Suggestions

What a beautiful city with lots to see. From where the shuttle drops you off it is then short walk down one street to the centre coming out near the Cathedral. Most of the main sites are within 10 - 15 mins of the Cathedral. The side streets are full of small shops selling some nice stuff at reasonable prices. Try and visit the food market, fantastic architecture and of course lots of fresh food.

There are two HOHO buses, Red and Blue routes with the red route going from Placa de la Reina near the Cathedral. There are also horse & carriages to take you around the city if you prefer not to walk. For those who like shopping there are 10 Corte Inglas and some great boutiques.

The Oceanographic of the City of Arts and Sciences is the largest aquarium in Europe and contains representatives of the world's main marine ecosystems. Each building is identified with the following aquatic environments: the Mediterranean, Wetlands, Temperate and Tropical Seas, Oceans, the Antarctic, the Arctic, Islands, and the Red Sea, as well as the Dolphinarium with 24 million litres of water and a depth of 10.5 metres. The Underwater Restaurant

Cruise Destinations

If you like LLadro, then hop into a taxi and visit the LLadro factory shop. A beautiful building with over 600 pieces of Llardo displayed. You get a guided tour of the factory where you can observed technicians working on various pieces. They take you through the moulding process to painting and you get to watch the people make them. It is amazing to see the painstaking detail of painting the Lladros especially eyebrows, flowers, etc. There is a shop there where you can purchase items. A very informative tour that is highly recommended. The tour has to be booked in advance and there is no charge for it. Booking form at this site: <http://museo.lladro.com/sitio-museolladro-ENG/> it is a bit out of town so you need to take a taxi, €10 single in 2013. A lot cheaper than going on a ships tour.

Soak up the sun at one of Valencia's two beaches: the Playa de la Malvarrosa or the neighbouring Playa de las Arenas.

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

ALBANIA

Sarande



Sarandë is a town in southern Albania. It is one of the most important tourist attractions of the Albanian Riviera.

The town is very quaint with some nice local shops selling different jewellery and designer handbags. Lots of little restaurants dotted around and at the far end fisherman selling their catch from the front of their boats. The majority of the shops, small and large take Euros.

This is a port with very mixed reviews. It must be said that Albania is a very poor country just coming out of Communist hands. There are reports of many beggars, especially children, in and around the port. Most people have found that a polite no and walk passed and ignoring them works but other said they had trouble. Passengers have also remarked about thieves and pickpockets in the town. So, leave your wallets etc in the safe on the ship and take off jewellery, just in case.

A tender port. You are dropped off in the pretty harbour area.

Suggestions

Lekursi Castle is located on the top of a hill, overlooking Sarandë. There are excellent views of Corfu and the islands of Ksamil from the castle, and inside you'll find a nice restaurant which is frequently visited by tourists. There is a Folklore Excursion to Lekuresi Castle.

Once you get out of the hustle and bustle of Sarande City and drive for about 30 minutes north along the coast, you will find some of the most spectacularly untouched natural beauty. Silver-leaved olive trees line the sparkling Ionian Sea, parts of which exhibit the bright blue-green colour you'd expect to see only in the Caribbean. The beaches in this area are cleaner and much less crowded than those in or near the city.

To get on to the promenade follow the road ahead and to the right of the port area till you come to a long flight of steps on your right 43 of them! Nice wander along the prom with plenty of bars and restaurants. Covered market full of local wares. If you want a nice beachfront bar then walk along the prom until you find a bit of jetty running parallel to the pebble beach. Fast free wifi here too!

The beach is like concrete rubble not very pleasant and a steep hill or steps to access, there is a flat walkway once down there but watch for the beggar's, flies and dog excrement.

CROATIA

The local currency is the Kuna and whilst some places accept the Euro and even Credit Cards there are many local shops, tour operators and even the buses that do not. This is the same if you want sun beds on beaches. If you are unsure check first before ordering.

Dubrovnik



Sailing into the beautiful 12th century Croatian walled city of Dubrovnik is one of the great cruising experiences. The spectacular Old Town - with its pretty harbour, towering ramparts, creamy stone pavements and red-roofed buildings - is crammed with architectural wonders like Onofrio's Fountain - constructed in the 1430s - and the 14th century Franciscan Monastery, home to a wonderful statue of the Piéta carved in 1498, and the world's oldest pharmacy (est. 1391).

If visiting in the summer months temperatures can get well into the 30's.

You can dock or tender depending on how many ships are in. The shuttle bus takes you to the Pile Gate (the old Town), this is about a twenty minute drive away. At the terminal in Dubrovnik there is a sign with taxi prices, including €10 to the Old Town. If you tender it takes you through an archway to the town.

Just a nice place to wander around with little outdoor cafes near the harbour and the weather was beautiful; it is a lovely sleepy town with beautiful old buildings.

Suggestions

A walk around the walls is very good. From Pile Square, walk through the city gate (there is an outer gate and an inner gate). Once in the inner gate you will see the main street in front of you. As you are looking down the main thoroughfare of the city which has the tower at the end of it, on the left opposite the fountain there is an opening, go through there and it's here you buy your ticket to do what is arguable a very good tour. There are two types of ticket an audio and no audio, the price of the audio was 120 kuna. **Note: you cannot use any other currency other than their own or you had to use a credit card, specifically said 'you could not pay with Euros' in big letters.** They will take credit cards. Be careful you only buy a wall ticket from one of the official ticket-offices, as there are often 'scammers' trying to sell cheap ones around the entrances to the walls.

Once on the walls every one walks in the same direction so you do not have to pass people. For those a little wary of heights, the walls are roughly roof-height, but solid stone with chest-high walls. There are some cafes on the wall so you can stop for a breather. The views are amazing, so my advice would be to have a look at the steps before you buy tickets and I think I would consider how hot the weather is. Even if it is busy, it's worth it!

For a Taxi tour (they wait where you will dock) ask the driver to take you to the top cable car station, on the way he will stop at various advantage points down the coast road. When you get to the top they usually have a walk around with you again pointing out and telling you about the war, when you are finished he will take you back down and offer to drop you off at the city walls or back to the ship. Four people in a taxi €50 great experience.

You can just do the cable car. You can purchase a ticket for the cable car at a small newsagent that is on the way to the boarding gate. You can then please yourself what time you go up. Relax in the cafe at the top and admire the stunning views.

Cruise Destinations

Visit the magnificently Gothic Sponza Palace and the 18th century Baroque Church of St Blaise, Dubrovnik's patron saint.

And, when you have had your fill of sightseeing, you will find pretty restaurants and cafés tucked away on Dubrovnik's narrow side streets - worth exploring as they also contain offbeat shops and art galleries. Lacework, oil paintings and ceramics are good buys but take plenty of cash with you, as some shops do not accept credit cards.

Do look for Buza, a bar just through the walls of the city with the most amazing views, follow the sign for ' cold drinks' expect to pay about 38kuna for a local beer and 40 for export.

If you decided to stop for an ice cream be warned; DO NOT get a double. A single cone costs 10kuna (2014) and is perhaps the biggest ice cream cone you will ever have. Secondly a tip; take a spoon.

For something different try a trip to the little town of Cavtat, You can either go on an excursion or get a boat from the harbour at the far end of the main drag, it is a really lovely little place, very oldie worldly with a gorgeous picturesque cove with lots of yachts and a promenade with tropical plants, benches, flowers and a fountain.

Another good DIY excursion is a boat for a trip around Lokrum Island, a little way off shore from Dubrovnik. It is €10pp, 2016, for a lovely trip which lasts about 50 minutes. Lokrum is beautiful.

Hvar



Hvar is a city and port on the island of Hvar, part of Split-Dalmatia County, Croatia. It's easy to see why Hvar is such a popular town on this beautiful Dalmatian Riviera island, where terracotta tiled houses cling to the lush hillside rising from the pretty yacht-filled harbour.

The area is rich in history and known for its medieval architecture. Take in the incredible views over Hvar and the surrounding islands from the 16th century Fortica Fortress. Or visit the cathedral dedicated to St Stephen and the

Bishop's Palace, which forms one side of St Stephen's square. The Franciscan monastery, founded in 1461, is home to an intriguing museum and also well worth investigating.

This is a tender port.

Suggestions

Pakleni Islands; A ten minute boat taxi ride away and it is well worth the visit. secluded, quiet, has a bar, deck lounges, and an amazing view!

Hvar Fortress; It is a beautiful walk up to the fortress through some phenomenal natural scenery. The fortress itself is interesting and well worth exploring. It's really high up and you can see for miles, over the whole of Hvar.

Try and excursion to the island of Vis.

Cruise Destinations

Korčula



Korčula is a Croatian island in the Adriatic Sea, off the mainland's Pelješac peninsula.

This port and part of the Mediterranean is a hidden gem. Preferred over Dubrovnik by many. It seems more real and lived in. You can just wander the town or sit in a cafe and watch the world go by.

It is very pretty from the water and interesting to see but quite small so you can see everything in a couple of hours.

Suggestions

Korčula Old City; Korčula town has all for a choosy visitor. It has fine position on a small hill near the seaside on marvellous island. You can visit local museum, look at old stone architecture in narrow streets, you can hear some legends about Marco Polo. You can also find some good and some average restaurants.

Korčula Town Museum; 4 floors with lots of interesting information panels, ranging from prehistoric occupation of the island to a few bits and bobs about what happened on Korčula during WW2. It is very good value, and everything is well presented.

If you fancy a lovely beach take the small ferry across to the other side from Korčula.

Mljet



Mljet is the southernmost and easternmost of the larger Adriatic islands of the Dalmatia region of Croatia.

It classes itself as the most beautiful and most forested island in the Adriatic and one of the most beautiful pearls of the Mediterranean. Untouched nature, the island's mysticism, olive groves, vineyards and rich forests are ideal places to research the rich flora and fauna, and to peacefully enjoy the pristine beauty of the natural surroundings.

Suggestions

There is not a lot on the island. Visits to its many caves and National Park are high on it's to do list. However, boat trips are required for these; the good news is these can be hired on the island.

Rijeka



Rijeka is the principal seaport and the third-largest city in Croatia. It is located on Kvarner Bay, an inlet of the Adriatic Sea.

Croatia's third-largest city, Rijeka is a bustling blend of gritty 20th-century port and Italianate Habsburg grandeur. Despite some regrettable architectural ventures in the outskirts, much of the centre is replete with ornate Austro-Hungarian-style buildings. It's a surprisingly verdant city once you've left its concrete core, which contains Croatia's

largest port, with ships, cargo and cranes lining the waterfront.

Cruise Destinations

Suggestions

Trsat Castle; The Trsat Castle is really Special. It has the best view of this area and the Castle is small, but very nice.

Peek & Poke Computer Museum; It's a must visit place for anyone who enjoys electronics, video games or just want to have a nostalgic feeling. Something different.

Old Gateway (Roman Arch); Beautiful Roman Arch with pleasant plaza with some bars hidden behind the City tower.

Rovinj



Rovinj is a Croatian fishing port on the west coast of the Istrian peninsula. The old town stands on a headland, with houses tightly crowded down to the seafront. A tangle of cobbled streets leads to the hilltop church of St. Euphemia, whose towering steeple dominates the skyline. South of the old town is Lone Bay, one of the area's pebble beaches. The Rovinj archipelago's 14 islands lie immediately off the mainland.

The main road running through the old town, it is a fantastic place to wander and go up all of the small side roads with artisan shops and cafes, a lot specialise in locally produced olive oil and truffles. There is a huge variety of places to go into for lunch or a drink. Some of the areas are quite steep and the istrian stone cobbles can be slippery in places

Suggestions

Old Town; Not only is the old town stunning from outside, but inside is even better. The windy cobble stone laneways are beautiful. Loads of great shopping & restaurants.

Punta Corrente; This is a quite large National Park area with lots of well made paths to go exploring through quite densely forested areas and also hugging the coastline of the bay, there is a good selection of cafes and it is ideal for walking jogging and cycling, be warned that there is also a large naturist area in the middle.

Rent a Bike; Bike Hire is 50 kuna for half a day.

Port of Rovinj; An absolute must in Rovinj is to visit the marina with its abundance of local shops, restaurants, cafes and local inns. The surrounding area is a photographers paradise for great shots and there are many activities that you can do, with many options available from locals that will leave you wanting more. A beautiful piece of history with the walled city surrounded by water, and absolute gem in the northern region of Istria.

Sibenik



Šibenik is a historic city in Croatia, located in central Dalmatia where the river Krka flows into the Adriatic Sea. It's most famous for its Saint James Cathedral, which is on the UNESCO World heritage list. Almost a trademark of the city is the traditional šibenik hat, coloured orange and black, the city's colours.

Cruise Destinations

Suggestions

For views across the Dalmatian coast, climb to the top of not one - but two - Venetian forts built in the 16th century to repel Ottoman invasion. In the Old Town, the Cathedral of St James is the city's crowning glory. Admire the jaw-dropping fusion of Gothic and Renaissance styles in the vast interior.

Cathedral of St. James; The Cathedral is really beautiful, it truly is. A stunning construction in a very nice setting, the huge doors have a carving on each panel telling a story. In July, 2016 there was some reconstruction being carried out. It is not far from the Šibenik shore front.

St Michael's Fortress; The fortress is situated in the middle of the old town and is awarding its visitors with beautiful view towards the city.

Split



Split, a town on Croatia's Dalmatian Coast, is known for its beaches and the fortress like complex at its centre. It is the second largest city in Croatia, with just over 200,000 inhabitants, and is the largest city on the Adriatic coast.

This is a Tender Port.

The old Split is stunning, but make sure you see this before the old city in Dubrovnik, so you can compare.

Suggestions

Even if you have but only half a day in Split, you can even take the essential glimpse of the Old Split effectively. Everything is within your walking distance and you can even enjoy some relaxing time in the shadow escaping from the heating Dalmatian sunlight! Wander through the twisting alleyways or wander thru the Markets outside the west gate, you not only meet all styles of merchandise, you get to marvel at a City dating back 1700 years and still going strong. Ok, it's crowded and narrow but you only have to visit once & take those memories home but you won't forget the buildings, the bars & restaurants and the sights!!

For the old town follow the harbour round to the left, cross the road then go one street farther in. Find a free old town map if you can. There are many markets, tourist goods, lace, hand knits, lavender, fish and antiques. There is also a big underground market in some old cloisters (farthest end of the old town from where the ship docks) down near the shore front.

The Peristyle of Diocletian's Palace; Nice historical place in centre of Split. The palace was built in the 4th c. AD. It is the most complete Roman palace known in the world today and it is truly spectacular. It beautiful and full of old Dalmatian spirit and every Noon, men dress in the old Empire Diocletian

Cathedral and Bell Tower of St. Domnius; This is a must see in Split. Climb the tower for spectacular views....but it's not for the faint hearted, narrow stairs wind up the inside of the building with not much below you! Well worth it though.

Krka National Park, but has an excursion £45pp and £30 for children. Now this is a place of mixed reviews. Some have loved it whilst other have said there is not enough time to appreciate it. There is an early start, followed by 1 1/2 hrs on the coach and a walk through the National Park on a boardwalk for about 45mins. There is a steep downhill part of manmade steps made of soil and wooden slats to finally get to the waterfall. However, you only get about 30 mins to admire the views. There is no need to climb back up as you catch a boat and the coach meets you at the end.

Trogir



Trogir is a town on the central Adriatic coast of Croatia. Its preserved old town, known for its mix of Renaissance, baroque and Romanesque buildings, lies on a small island connected to the mainland and the island of Čiovo by bridges.

The old center of Trogir is like a museum area with buildings dating back to the 13th century but at the same time full of life with perhaps hundreds of restaurants, cafeterias, shops and happy looking people. You will enjoy it whether you are interested about the Dalmatian history, traditions or

cooking. The narrow streets invite to walk around and the lovely harbor side to sit down for maybe an ice cream before you go to visit the Kamerlengo fortress from the 15th century.

Suggestions

St. Michael Bell-tower; The stairs to the bell tower are not too narrow and although you have iron balustrades to hold on to, the stairs are not enclosed. The views of the town from the top are worth the climb.

Kamerlengo Castle; Beside serving as a historic site, Kamerlengo Fortress offers visitors only a panoramic view over Trogir and surrounding areas. Although the entrance fee does not cost much, I think the Fortress should offer something more rather than leave it sitting empty.

Vis



Vis is a Croatian island in the Adriatic Sea, off the Dalmatian Coast.

It is the furthest of the main Central Dalmatian islands from the coast, Vis spent much of its recent history serving as a military base for the Yugoslav army, cut off from foreign visitors from the 1950s right up until 1989. The isolation preserved the island from development

Suggestions

There are many caves to visit; however, you will need to book either an excursion or local agent. However, the majority of the trips go from Hvar.

Zadar



Zadar, a city on Croatia's Dalmatian coast, is known for the Roman and Venetian ruins of its peninsular old town, including several Venetian gates in the city walls.

The Old Town lies on a peninsula contained within the roads running along two quays. Beyond medieval Zadar lies the economic heart of the city as post war housing, industrial parks and commercial zones sprawl outward to the suburbs.

Suggestions

Visiting Zadar is like peeling back layers of time until you end up in the 9th century BC in ancient Illyria. The Old Town is paved with gleaming white stone and the straight streets were first laid out by the Romans. A high wall remains on the harbour side, built by the Venetians in the 16th century, and an entrance gate still sports the Venetian lion.

Cruise Destinations

Sea Organ; The sea organ is definitely a unique attraction! The force of the waves entering the sea organ generated the pitch of the sounds coming out of the organ.

The Greeting to the Sun; Right next to the Sea Organ is the Sun Salutation. A huge solar collector that turns on a light show in the evening that you can walk all over.

Zadar City Gate; Nice city with old original roman buildings and sight worth seeing. The pedestrian area is also worth walking around.

The Forum; Zadar is living history and one of the best parts is the Forum a well preserved Roman ruin in the middle of the old city.

About 6km to the northwest lies the wooded beach suburbs of Diklo and Boric which have been developed into a tourist zone.

CYPRUS

The Republic of Cyprus occupies the southern part of the island of Cyprus in the eastern Mediterranean. The island (and capital city Nicosia) is divided with Turkey to the north. Known for beaches, it also has a rugged interior with wine regions. Coastal Paphos is famed for its archaeological sites relating to the cult of Aphrodite, including ruins of palaces, tombs and mosaic-tiled villas.

Amazing how such a small island can hold such a rich history.

Suggestions

Pafos Archaeological Site; The mosaics are exceptional as are the ruins. A good walk if you take in the full site,

Kourion (Curium); Well worth visiting and only 4.5 euros each. Great views and plenty to see.

Cyprus Museum; The museum has a wide range of archaeological material from sites around the island. Highlights are the Archaic ceramic sculptures and the furniture.

Larnaca



Larnaca (Larnarka) is a port city on the south coast of Cyprus. It's known for Finikoudes Beach, a sandy strip in the city centre backed by a palm-lined seaside promenade. Buzzing bars line the waterfront at Mackenzie Beach.

Has a nice sea frontage promenade.

Unless you are prepared to go further afield and into the countryside, this is a beach resort.

Cruise Destinations

Limassol



Cyprus' second-largest city appeals to a wide range of tourists, from those interested in sun and sand vacations to those who prefer to delve into the island's culture at its museums and sites of archaeological interest. This large seaside resort on Akrotiri Bay on the sunny southern coast.

It's known for the centuries-old Limassol Castle, home to the Cyprus Medieval Museum and its collection of pottery and tombstones. On the seafront is the Prokymea (Molos) Sculpture Park, with sculptures by Cypriot, Greek and international artists. To the northeast is the Limassol Archaeological Museum, exhibiting artifacts from the Neolithic to the Roman periods.

Wrapped around the dinky castle, the central old town radiates out in a squiggle of lanes where old shuttered houses and modern boutiques both squeeze themselves into the fray. It's an area buzzing with cafes, bars and restaurants that are as popular with locals as they are with visitors.

Try a stroll along its promenade, you can walk all the way from Limassol marina to Amathus. There are occasional public toilets. Watch out for tourists (and locals) on Segway's, bikes, etc.

Nicosia



Is very interesting, very busy with ancient and modern buildings.

This is the capital of Cyprus and is therefore very busy. It is nice in the old town and it is pedestrianised in parts. Be careful, because it is inland it is the hottest place in Cyprus and temperatures can reach 40°C.

Try and visit Ledra Street and look around the back streets of the walled city nearer to the green line. It is a like another world. You can actually walk across the green line into the North. Cheaper for a cup of coffee there, some cheaper jewellery shops.

There is a really good viewing area in Ledra Street (Greek side). It is on the top floor of Shakolas Tower. This is the building where Debenhams is on the ground floor. Go to level 11 and there is an observatory. All hi-tech where you can view over the into Northern occupied areas.

It is interesting to compare the difference in culture between the modern thriving Greek Nicosia and the Turkish sector. The two sides of the island are quite different as the Turkish side which is still occupied by the Turks is poorer, but they are getting wealthier from gambling. So don't be tempted as you can get stung by the casinos on every corner in Kyrenia. Casinos not allowed here in the South.

Famagusta



The first must-see here is the huge citadel. It's known as Othello's Tower and it was built to protect the harbour from invasion. Try and pay a visit to St Nicholas Cathedral, which dominates the city's main square.

The ancient town of Salamis is just a few miles from Famagusta, once the capital of Cyprus; it's a treasure trove of Roman and Byzantine remains.

GREECE

Aghios Nikolaos



Aghios Nikolaos or Aghios Nikolaos is a coastal town on the Greek island of Crete, lying east of the island's capital Heraklion,

Aghios Nikolaos is a medium-size town with a small-town feel, one that has lots to offer. You can walk and enjoy walking here, you have several distinct waterfronts - you can get to know it quickly and feel familiar with the place, like an old friend.

The town has three faces to the sea: The Lake and port, Kitroplatia beach and the Marina. Its unique features, start with the lake ("Voulismeni"), a folklore-inspiringly deep body of water which is connected to the sea by a narrow inlet. It is surrounded and overlooked by cafes and restaurants - a busy gathering place for local residents and visitors alike.

Cafes meander between those suited for talking, meeting and lounging, to those playing thump-dump music, nestled alongside more scholarly hang-outs. Standard but good tavernas are overlooked by fine-dining establishments.

Suggestions

Lake Voulismeni; The lake is an extension really of the harbour, with views to the open sea beyond. Lots of bars, eateries and a few tourist shops line two sides. For the very best vista, be sure to climb to the top road above the Lake. Great ice creams at Dodoni.

Cretan Olive Oil Farm; you were able to have a guided tour around the small site with an excellent insight into differences in olive oil, and how they produce it. All for the cost of €5, for an additional cost of €6 you are able to participate in a cookery lesson. If you really want to know how to make stuffed vine leaves (dolmades) or tzatziki, then this is for you. You able to sample the olives, raki, and olive oil, staff friendly, worth a few hours of your day

Gournia; The remains of a Minoan village that must have been quite amazing in its day. A €2 entry fee lets you wander around. The site is easily accessible on the main road between Agios Nickolias and Sitia. Near by a bus stop. However, it is a hot exposed site without any facilities, so take water with you as there isn't anything nearby. Worth the visit large site with some descriptive signs.

Athens



The Acropolis - 'High City' - will always be the top attraction from Athens cruise port Piraeus.

With its 2,500-year-old Parthenon, temple to Poseidon and Athena, Odeon of Herodus Atticus and Theatre of Dionysus, it quite literally stands out as an oasis of calm in the frenetic Greek capital.

As part of the major revamp the city had for the 2004 Olympics, 400 modern buildings were cleared from the ancient meeting place next to the Acropolis, the Agora, which was then restored and linked by walkways to the Acropolis, Hadrians Arch, the Academy of Plato and the Monastery of Daphne.

Other nearby ancient sites include the Roman Tower of the Winds and the Hill of the Muses where Socrates is said to have drunk hemlock. Below the Acropolis is the fun place to shop or barter, eat moussaka or Greek salad, drink wine or ouzo and, of course, to people-watch: the 3,000-year-old Plaka.

Piraeus is your port of call for this city.

Suggestions

Athens is stunning and the surrounding area beautiful. No need to pay for trips.

Just outside the port terminal (Piraeus) there are many taxis' offering round trips to Athens and of course the Acropolis, There are HOHO buses that take you from the port to Athens, you can get a ticket for the 2 lines (red and green) on the HOHO buses. So you can get on the bus at the port and take it to the acropolis directly, you can then also take the other line (they cross at that stop) and take a tour round Athens as well the cost is €25 for the 2 routes for the day, but can be bought cheaper online in advance, I think €22 (2016)

There is an Express Bus, X80, which runs from outside the Port Terminals straight into Athens. It drops you off for the Acropolis and the Plaka in Syntagma Square. It's about a 20-25 minute ride and costs just €4.50 for an all-day bus ticket. (2017)

From Terminal A (which has a ring road outside) walk to the right and the bus stop is near Irish Pub.

- From Terminal B walk left for the Bus stop. The Bus is Number X80
- Check on the return times before getting off.

Alternatively once you come out of the port terminal building there are the yellow taxis outside the port entrance. Do not accept the first price, walk away, and the drivers will drop their price, try for around €50. Once agreed they will wait for you at the Acropolis then bring you back to port. No payment is made until you get back.

There is also a metro train. However, it is a way from the cruise terminal, about 30 mins walk.

The ticket office at the Acropolis only accepts cash, so be prepared for that as the miserable desk staff aren't much help. Tickets are €20 for adults for the Acropolis only or €30pp for the entrance to both the Acropolis and the Temple of Zeus. A money saving tip, you can save €15 off the €30 entrance fee to the Acropolis & its museum and other sites if you are over 65 - you just have to show a copy of your passport to confirm your age.

Cruise Destinations

There is a frozen lemonade stand outside the ticket office selling delicious lemonade for a somewhat extortionate €4.50 per cup. After coming out on a hot day then the price for a cool drink does not matter and one cup is enough for two people.

Speaking of rules, there is a big marble tablet as you enter the site with a list of rules - some of them are obvious, while others are more entertaining.

The ruins in the Acropolis (including the Parthenon) themselves are breath-taking to behold and well worth a visit. A guide will naturally let you know in more detail what you're looking at, but there are lots of signs explaining everything and a bit of time on Wikipedia will offer plenty of enlightenment as to the history of the site.

The view from the top back towards the city is stunning, and you start to get a sense of the scale of the city.

Just for the two of us we had priced a taxi, €50 and the entrance fee being an extra €20pp making a total of €90, (2016). From research this was Port to Acropolis, taxi driver would wait for you, Acropolis back to Port. The P&O 'Crown Jewel of Athens', which we saw in our personaliser was Port to Acropolis, entrance fee and tour guide included, followed by a tour of Athens and a visit to the Olympic Stadium. This was £44pp in the Personaliser. We opted for the P&O trip. Then of course take off your loyalty discount. The trip is 4 hours and I would suggest if there is a choice, go for the morning one. Ours set off at 9:15 and we were back for 1:30pm. For this you need to do your sums, especially if there are four of you. On Board the same tour was £46pp.

Are you up to the visit to the Acropolis? Let us look. The trip through Piraeus on your way to Athens will be in heavy traffic and took us 25 mins. From the car/coach park at the bottom of the Acropolis to the entrance is about a $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. There is a mixture of steps (80+) and paths. These are spread out over the whole distance. It is uphill and sometimes it is steep, but there are trees for most of the way up so there is some shade. The paths and steps are a mixture of marble and rock and in places there are large lumps of rocks jutting out of the ground. When you get to the top there are lots of steps to climb before you reach the Pantheon itself and the path around the building is uneven and in places very slippery. Then there are the crowds, expect 1000+ all vying for that spot to take their photos. Finally, there is the heat, we went in May and it was 80F+ and there is no shade or cover on top. Not to put you off, for me it is not for anyone who has major mobility issues and not for anyone who feels the heat, there are areas and other trips where you can view the Pantheon from the bottom without the climb and of course without the entrance fee. Only you can decide.

Other tips, wear sensible clothing, and good firm shoes, as said very hot and rocky ground. Take a good hat; ok it may spoil your hair but better than heat exhaustion. Then plenty of water, we took two flasks of cold water and drunk both. Contrary to reviews I have read and been informed of when I have asked that all drinks were banned from the site. We took water into the site.

The Corinth Canal transit from Piraeus is a lovely excursion - not too much walking so long as you can get on and off a boat. The time of this excursion is normally early, around 8am, as the terminal is some way from the ship and you need to get a shuttle bus to the terminal.

Now, some information regarding the trip: Read the warnings in the excursion information and 'eat a hearty breakfast'. Sometimes due to all the activities your lunch is not until 3:30pm. So a long day. You arrive at a 'service station' near to the canal. It has snacks and drinks, toilet facilities, tourist tat, postcards etc. If you are doing this trip it might be an idea to grab a pastry or packet of crisps to eat on the boat, it could be over 4 hours before you sit down for your meal.

The ruins and museum at Corinth is not too bad an excursion. Another different trip is out to Cape Sounion to the Temple of Poseidon.

Corfu



Corfu, an island off Greece's northwest coast in the Ionian Sea, is defined by rugged mountains and a resort-studded shoreline. Its rich culture reflects years spent under Italian, French and British rule before it was united with Greece in 1864. Beaches range from the fine sand and shallow waters of Ayios Georgios to the water sports and party atmosphere at Cavos. It is where Prince Phillip was born.

You go from the ship to the terminal building by shuttle (if you cannot use the shuttle, for whatever reason, it is quite a walk, flat and walkable) you then have to disembark the shuttle and walk through the terminal building to a car park where you get another shuttle which will take you into the town. You can also walk to town it is about a 30 mins boring walk to the old town). There is a local bus that will drop you off close to the old town.

Suggestions

A lovely town just to walk around with some amazing local pastry, coffee shops plenty of bars and cafes for lunch and shops. Or you can get the holiday bus and see the sights and if they take your fancy you can get off and on when you like.

Top tip is, when you get off the free shuttle bus, walk through the old town and you will come out at a large open park area with restaurants alongside. Beyond the park is the old fortress (reasonable entrance fee) which is worth checking out and a great 360 degree view from the top. On the way back follow the windy footpath in the castle grounds to a serene cafe with tables looking over a marina,

There is a tour to Achillion Palace and the Monastery and Paleokastritsa. It includes a Greek lunch about 6 courses and dancing it was well worth the money. The cost of the tour included lunch, unlimited wine and home cooked food. Greek Roast Lamb slow cooked, Greek Roasties with Greek salad, it was worth every penny.

Glyfada Beach is worth a visit. It has sunbeds and all the usual facilities.

A recommended ships tour is Sights & Winery' £38pp, you can be dropped off in town afterwards.

Chania (Crete)



The Chania harbour is wonderful and at any particular time of day the light produces a different result, creating a "different place". This is the best chance to see some of the old buildings - of Venetian and Turkish design, that Crete once had across the island - many have since been destroyed by the ravages of war and plunder.

Chania is surrounded by numerous rich options for sightseeing, exploration and discovery. Mountain villages provide a view into the "inner Crete". The Samaria and many other gorges can be hiked, archaeological sites abound.

Before visiting go on the net and get a map of the area and the town of Chania. It is a very pleasant place to walk around and enjoy.

The courtesy bus will drop you at the indoor market. Walk through and out to the back entrance, turn left and you will be in the tourist shopping streets where the leather goods are noticeably cheaper than many other places on Crete. At the end of the street(s) turn right down the hill to the harbour, well worth a visit for food, drink and people watching

Cruise Destinations

Suggestions

Explore the waterfront and streets just behind. Walk along the harbour wall to the Venetian Lighthouse. Visit the wonderful Naval Museum (Maritime Museum) - it delivers a superb introduction to the History of Crete. Admission: €2.50pp.

The archaeological museum on Halidon Street is smaller than its grand Heraklion cousin, though well worth visiting. Admission: €1.5

Outside Chania: trips to the many surrounding monasteries, the Samaria Gorge (take a bus to Omalos or a tour as you will walk the Gorge).

Visit Venizelos Graves, which has magnificent views from amongst the trees, on a hill above Chania, across the town, Venetian harbour and sweeping over the sea & beyond. Best place to pause & enjoy the view.

Gythion



Gytheio, the ancient Gythium or Gytheion, is a town and a former municipality in Laconia, Peloponnese, Greece.

The waterfront has three sections. The middle part is the harbour with its fishing boats and a few restaurants, pizzarias, cafes and shops, a great place to take an evening promenade with the locals and their families in the summer months.

There is a small square known as Platia Githeiou and the Ouzerie Korali has some tables in the square and some great mezedes. In a town like Gythion whose visitors are primarily Greeks and Greek-Americans it is hard to go wrong when going out to eat.

Two life-size statues on the quayside, one of a tailed mermaid and one of a sailor in baggy trousers shading his eyes and gazing out to sea are the first things you will come across as you make your way towards town.

Even though Gythion is a working town and is run-down in parts. The pretty seafront and excellent fish restaurants there make the town an enjoyable and memorable port of call, particularly if you just want a relaxed day ashore that won't take you far from your ship.

Suggestions

You have two excellent sites near Gythion that the cruise ship will have a coaches lined up to take people to.

Frist is Monmevassia a 15th century fortified town that is still operating. It is fun to explore and feel what it was like to live in the past. It is probably less than an hour to drive there.

The second is Mystras at Sparti. Mystras was the last city of the Byzantines and has several cathedrals and a fortress. Its a great site.

Personally I would see if I could round up 4 friends and hire a car for a few hours. It is an easy drive to both sites.

Shipwreck Dimitrios; Great beach, quite wavy when it is windy! Stunning view of this shipwreck and great opportunity for some interesting photos. Last but not least great food in "Glyfada" restaurant, which combines even sunbeds, coffee, & cocktails in its bar.

Cruise Destinations

Lighthouse of Gythio; The lighthouse is on a cool little peninsula, but it's kind of tough to get there and a little awkward. You have to walk down an old dirt path which is cobbled, The lighthouse itself is not much to see, but the walk out to it provides some great photo opportunities of the Gythio waterfront.

Heraklion (Crete)



The proud city of Heraklion is the modern capital of Crete, largest and most ruggedly beautiful of the Greek Isles.

Heraklion is the largest city and the administrative capital of the island of Crete, Greece. It is one of the largest cities in Greece. You will find yourself in an ugly and modern, a maelstrom of traffic, concrete and dust. But similar to Athens it is what lies behind this city.

Beyond the crazed progress of moped riders, noisy scooters and a battered, out-of-control look to the city, there is much to do and plenty of things worth seeing. Apart from shopping and the designer clothes on Daedalou Street ("Daydaloo"), there are many small shops off all the main streets which sell those local products which normally are used when you live in Crete. Just have a look along 1866 Street and more so its side streets - you may find a curio distinctly different from more typical "gifts" offered to visitors in gift shops.

You are shuttled from where you berth to the terminal. From here there is a HOHO bus and lots of taxis. If you wish to walk into the city then it is about 20 - 30 mins and you follow the 'Yellow Line', just like Dorothy, this leads straight there and of course an easy to remember route back.

Suggestions

The Palace of Knossos; For history buffs. 20-25 minutes from the centre of Heraklion. For many this is a must see, and for some a major reason to visit Crete. A Minoan palace - this is the closest you can get to piecing together the threads of the story of the Minoan civilisation through the structures the Minoans lived in.

The entrance fee is €15 per adult (kids were free), A dual entrance fee, including Archaeological Museum is €16. Over 60's €8. There is ample tourist information boards around explaining the differ areas and altogether. We spent a little over an hour at Knossos and it is worth seeing. The restoration is still ongoing but what has been completed is a wonder to see. Look out for the peacocks. Prices are 2016.

If you are thinking of visiting Knossos then, it is walkable in places, but with this being an archaeological site there are some paths almost impossible to walk on if you are not fully mobile and to see the main sites there is a lot of steps to climb and uneven ground.

Heraklion Archaeological Museum; After Knossos, the Archaeological Museum is the best thing about Heraklion. It is laid out in order from Minoan to Roman with some beautiful pieces from these eras there. Photography is permitted on some items. The enormous Archaeological Museum is on one corner of the central Eleftherias Square. It has many of the finds from Knossos, Archanes, Phaestos, Zakros and many other archaeological sites in Crete. It's a good idea to start early in the morning or late in the day during the summer months to avoid a rush-hour style of viewing - this is a very popular destination. Admission: €6.00. Combined museum and Knossos ticket: €16.00. (2016)

Cathedral of St. Minas; not as big as other cathedrals I have visited, but still very impressive.

The Koules Venetian Fortress on the harbour walls, built in the early 1500's. Both for the impressive stone mass of its fortification and unfathomably solid walls, the pleasure of views from its turret and roof, restored interior and exterior reliefs of the Lion of St. Mark. Admission: €1.50.

Cruise Destinations

We took a taxi, air conditioned Merc, cost €70 and it covered, a tour to Morozini Aqueduct (Egyptian) outside Iraklion, views over the city and port area, Knossos (entrance extra), Cathedral, Venetian Walls, tomb of Nikos Kazantzakis (Zorba the Greek Author) before finally dropping us off in city near the Archaeological Museum. Our guide, Panos, was excellent and took his time to explain the history of the country and sites.

From the port, heading for town try the Venetian Fortress. It is nice to explore the fortress and admire the views from the upper terraces

By the sea front: there are several cafes and restaurants, mostly of the "touristy" variety. But to sit by the sea, with the fortress in view may well be worthwhile.

Beaches

Ammoudara Beach a nice beach with easy access and nearby facilities. The sand is clean and gently shelving for children. It is also served by lifeguards and has plenty of loungers.

Igoumenitsa



Igoumenitsa, is a coastal city in north-western Greece. The city is surrounded by pine-laden hills and has a wonderful seaside road lined with sycamores and a park.

The port of Igoumenitsa mainly serves as a gateway to Greek islands like Corfu, and Italian hotspots such as Venice. That said, it's worth a wander in its own right. There's a lovely sandy beach here, a handful of authentic restaurants, plus a harbour full of bobbing fishing boats.

This is not a known tourist destination.

Suggestions

The main entertainments for travellers in this resort remain beach, rest and walks of mountain regions. Drepano is known as one of the most popular beaches in Igoumenitsa region. It is well equipped for water sports; there are several sports inventory rental spots on the beach, scuba diving and surfing schools.

Archaeological Museum; The museum is located in Igoumenitsa, at the town end. The building is new and quite attentive.

You can head out of town to see some of the mainland's most picturesque countryside. Meadows, forests and valleys roll out for miles in this corner of Greece.

The whitewashed town of Syvota is around half an hour from Igoumenitsa, and it's brilliant for an afternoon walk. Expect alleyways full of curious shops, and a waterfront freckled with cafés.

Kalamata



Kalamata is the second most populous city of the Peloponnese peninsula in southern Greece.

This quiet, quaint pocket of Greece is the place to escape modern life. Hugging the coast along Messinia and the Main peninsula, it's a collection of great beaches and small towns. Central squares are lined with flowers and tavernas. And locals congregate to play backgammon, sip ouzo and tuck into bowls of the famous Kalamata olives. Best of all, it's a place where tour parties come in sprinkles not spades.

Standing guard on a rocky outcrop, the Ottoman fortress is Methoni's big draw. Get to it by crossing a weather-beaten stone bridge and you'll find twisting parapets, ruined churches and the octagonal 'bourtzi' tower cast out in the water.

Suggestions

Beach-lovers will find plenty of places to unravel their towels. The beaches in Kalamata and nearby Yialova are all buttermilk sands and turquoise seas.

Burrowed in the Mani peninsula are the Diros Caves. These underground sea chambers were once places of worship for Stone Age tribes. Taking a punt across the lakes is like being in another world.

Neokastro Castle; The fortress, was built back in 14th century to protect the southern entrance to Pylos Bay. Today you'll find relics such as cannons and anchors tucked behind its well-preserved walls. It's also home to the Centre for Underwater Archaeological Studies. The highest point of the castle is the hexagonal fort, which was used as high-security prison during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Archaeological Site of Messini; This one takes you back in time. The tour begins with a short drive to the Arcadian Gate, an impressive structure that once acted as an entrance to the ancient city of Messini. There'll be a short stop, so you can take some photos before getting back on the coach. From here, you'll head for the archaeological site of Messini, which dates all the way back to 146 BC. You'll find plenty in the way of treasures here, including an almost-intact theatre, the ruins of a 3rd-century temple, a time-worn sanctuary and a Byzantine monastery.

Katakolon



This small Greek port of Katakolon was developed in the 19th century to serve the thriving local trade in currants. Today it is your starting block for Olympia - birthplace of the Olympic Games.

A pretty town on the banks of the River Alpheios, Olympia lies only a short drive away from the port and its historic stadium - where the first Olympic torch was lit in 776 BC and is a fascinating site to explore.

There are two berths, one closer than the other. Just outside the port terminal, a walk of about 15 - 20 mins from the ship or take the free shuttle, there are many taxis' offering round trips to Olympia as well as offers of bus tours.

Suggestions

This place has mixed reviews. Some love it and others hate it.

Cruise Destinations

If you have already visited Olympia, you could spend your day exploring the lush wine country north of Katakolon and sampling the local vintages.

Katakolon itself consists of 2 streets, the front street is mainly restaurants and bars with an occasional shop. Street two is mainly shops with an occasional ice cream bar or bar.

There are horse drawn carriages and a land train at the far side of town for a tour of the neighbouring area.

You can enjoy wandering around the little shops in the main street and a drink at the waterfront, very relaxing. There are one or two nice shops selling souvenirs. The little tourist train only takes you to nowhere and back again.

There is a very enjoyable excursion to the Mercuri Winery, where after a brief tour of the old winery you were led to the grounds where there were tables and chairs laid out with bottles of wine, crusty bread, olives and cheese to enjoy, with some good company.

The main attraction from Katakolon is Olympia.

Olympia



What most are agreed with is if you have been to Ephesus, Athens or Pompeii then you would be very disappointed with Olympia.

If you are thinking of DIY then there is a small travel office at Katakolon which sells trips to Olympia for €10. The service is advertised as you leave the quay.

The train, Katakolon to Olympia runs every 2 hours and there are three a day. So, if you want to do this as a DIY there

options are there. The train station is at the end of the shopping parade in Katakolon, approximately 200 yards from the port gates. If your ship has moored at the longest pier, 5-10 minutes probably allows sufficient time to walk to and from the station. Train Cost: €10pp return (2016)

Timings

Katakolon 8:40, 9:45, 10:45 - Arrive Olympia: 9:30, 10:30, 11:30 From Olympia: 12:10, 13:08, 14:00 arriving in Katakolon: 12:55, 13:55, 14:45.

When you arrive in Olympia the site is 600 metres from the station, I think they seem to run the trains according to how many ships in port.

<http://www.katakolon.org/katakolon-train.html>

It is about 30 mins journey to Olympia, Olympia is what you want from it. Remember that this is the most important ancient sites in the world as it was the birthplace and home of the Olympic Games and is still where the Olympic torch for the modern games is lit to this day. Within the overall Olympia site are various ruined temples, former sports arenas, gyms, equestrian area etc. You can still see the marble starting blocks used by early athletes in the 45,000-seat arena, as well as the ruins of the Temple of Hera and the gigantic Temple of Zeus - its gold and ivory statue of Zeus was one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world.

The buildings and the ethos of the original games are clearly explained. Additionally there is a very good modern museum with some amazing things from the site. The town itself also has some tavernas and cafes to relax afterwards.

Cruise Destinations

Olympia itself is quite a large site but do not expect fantastic buildings or even part buildings it is in ruins with only some columns remaining. But, with a good guide and some imagination you can see what was there and how it worked. We spent a good 1 ½ hrs on site and walked through the majority of the area. After our tour we went to a small area where there were a couple of shops for those tourist things and more importantly toilets and a cafe. It is an open site so; sensible clothing, hat and water are a must.

If you are DIYing this place then the cost is €12pp entrance fee, this included the cost of a visit to the museum. Like lots of sites, the entrance price is halved if you are over 65 and have proof of that.

Kefalonia



Argostoli is a town and a former municipality on the island of Kefalonia, Ionian Islands, Greece. This is one of those places you will want to go back to. This is one of those places you will want to go back to.

Its colourful waterfront buildings and palm trees reminded you more of a Caribbean port than a Greek one.

The harbour is full of huge, expensive yachts with their wealthy passengers enjoying the glorious morning sunshine as

you take the short stroll into town. As you walk along the water's edge passing fishing boats keep an eye on the water. It is not uncommon to spot a huge turtle swimming around and delighting the crowds by popping his head up for air occasionally.

Suggestions

Further along the harbour front past the fruit and vegetable markets towards the Koutavos lagoon, a mountain lined sea water lake which is apparently home to 30 or so of the turtles.

Close to the harbour is some pedalos and little motor boats. It is very reasonable €15 per hour to hire a VW beetle themed pedalo complete with sun canopy that could seat up to 4. You are given a complimentary bottle of water and a quick lesson before being allowed to peddle off into the sunshine.

You must stop for the highly recommended Mythos local beer in a sea front cafe and then walk back a few streets into the town's shopping area.

A visit to the underground cave is a must with lots of stalagmites and stalactites.

Beaches: There is one right alongside where the ship berths.

Close to where the ship berths is a tour company called Avalon promoting trips including one to Myrtos beach which was timed around your ship arrival and departure and guaranteed to get you back in time and cost €30 per adult and €15 for a child.

Khios



Sailing through the beautiful blue Aegean Sea, you'll find the port of Chios (or Khios), Greece, the fifth largest of the Greek islands and separated from Turkey by the Çesme Strait.

The island is divided into five regions; its main town, appropriately enough, is called Chios Town, or Chora to the locals. An ancient island, archaeological findings show it's been inhabited since at least the Neolithic era. Chios has a long and rich history, especially militarily. From the Romans

to the Ottoman Turks, multiple influences shaped Chios into what it is today. By 1912 and after the First Balkan War, Chios was finally able to rejoin the rest of independent Greece. With its mild, warm climate all year long, this bustling island included plenty of activities for those who love to both explore and relax. Here are a handful of our favorite experiences when cruising to Chios (Khios), Greece:

Suggestions

Pyrgi; A must visit village in Chios island. Very unique wall "painting" on facade of houses. It has also a nice square to relax by a Greek coffee .

Chios Castle; A good option to visit when you are in town. Close to the Harbour, the area has also nice small streets just to walk around with historical houses and a nice square with café's and a restaurants.

Windmills; Located very close to Chios town on the way to Vrontados, they look great both day and night. There is a small tavern right next to them.

Lesbos



Lesbos (also called Lesvos or Mitilini) is a Greek island in the northern Aegean Sea off the coast of Turkey. It's famous as the birthplace of the ancient Greek poet Sappho.

Lesbos is also known for its ouzo (an anise-flavoured liqueur).

Mytilene is your port of call and it is a tender port.

Suggestions

Molivos Castle; The castle is at the top of the village, a steady climb on cobbled streets if this is too difficult for you an easier option is to catch the little train which will take you up the back way. The castle is a ruin but it is worth visiting for the wonderful panoramic views.

Panagia Glykofilousa; 113 stairs to the top, obviously, no wheelchair/pram access, but it's worth it. Beautiful views overlooking the city. Impeccable lavatory. If you want to go into the church you should not be wearing shorts but something that covers your knees.

The Commander of Lesvos Monastery; The place is a typical Byzantine monastery with a fortress-like architecture. Very beautiful and peaceful environment in and around it. The cafe in the entrance is nothing special, but it is ok for some rest, cafe and traditional snacks (loukoumades).

Barbayannis Ouzo Museum; Very nicely set collection of history and memorabilia. There is an explanation of the history of famous Ouzo Barbayannis. They have also a tasting opportunity, easy to find and very helpful guides.

Monemvasia



Approach Monemvasia from the sea and you will be entranced by its unique beauty. Approach by land, however, and you wouldn't know the town was there. Perched on an island off the Peloponnese, Monemvasia shelters behind an enormous rock and is invisible from the mainland. Monemvasia is connected to the mainland by a bridge.

So, how to spend your time in a hidden town? Well, you could lose yourself in admiration of the Byzantine, Venetian and Ottoman architecture at every turn. You could stroll around the castle and be blown away by the sea views. Fancy a dip? Seek out a secret spot called the Portello - tiny harbour - where you can swim or snorkel in crystal clear waters and admire the incredible view up to the citadel. Or, a few minutes' walk will take you to Kourkoula, a natural rock pool where you can pleasurably while away the hours.

After which, take time to linger over a delicious meal, combining all that's best from the area; the excellent olive oil, wonderful wines, fresh herbs, and seafood from the Myrtoan Sea, the name for the sea lapping these shores.

Suggestions

Beautiful little town with narrow, winding streets, with many churches in the upper and lower levels. Plenty of souvenir shops, tavernas and restaurants. Walk through the town to see the defensive wall and further on, the lighthouse. The buildings right at the top of the island weren't accessible by the public.

You can first take the steps to visit the upper town, up to the castle where you can admire the castle, the view from the highest point, the Gate House, and the church of Ayia Sofia. Start your visit by walking the alleys, in the lower town, with many shops, cafés, guest houses and churches around the fortified path snaking up the rocks. It is said that there are 40 churches! 24 of them have been documented and bear witness to the history of Monemvasia with Byzantine, Venetian and Turkish (Ottoman occupation) elements.

Archeological Site of Epidavros Limera; you do not need a lot of time for your visit. However, it is an unforgettable one. The enormity of the outdoor odeum combined with the age are remarkable. Stand on the "stage" and speak to someone in the top row and see how easy it is to hear them!

Archaeological Collection of Monemvasia; It is recommended that visitors start here with a visit to the Museum. It is small but gives an excellent introduction to the rich history of the Byzantine city

Mykonos



One of the most visited Greek islands; Mykonos is a jewel in the Aegean Sea, famed as a vibrant and cosmopolitan destination. It is one of the most visited islands in the Aegean, yet still retains much of its picture postcard beauty. Mykonos effortlessly strikes a balance for visitors with a mix of lively bars and restaurants in the most populous areas, with nearby areas of tranquillity, outstanding natural beauty and rich history.

The Town of Mykonos is a hive of activity with some of the most famous landmarks such as Little Venice, famous for its picturesque medieval two and three storey houses which stand like a colourful wall against the sea. Mykonos is also world famous for its beaches. Kalafati Beach is a prime example with golden white sand lapped gently by a crystal clear sea.

Cruise Destinations

Mykonos can be either a tender or berth port. There is normally a shuttle, but some say it stops too far from the town. The public bus cost €1.60 or the water bus €2 one way to town. (2017)

Suggestions

It is a picturesque place, with beautiful white building and narrow alleys that seem to wind away for miles behind the seafront that is good for just a wander around. These little streets are lined with shops selling mainly jewellery (very expensive jewellery at that - many pieces over €10,000), art, and clothing.

However, if you wander further afield from the quaint, narrow streets lined with shops and up to the hill you come across stunning views across Mykonos and the harbour, as well as the beautiful windmills, the must do is a photo opportunity. These beautiful structures were mostly built in the 16th century by the Venetians where they were used to mill wheat. Their use declined over time, but they were still being used until the mid-20th century! One of these now houses a museum, while others are used as homes.

If you are looking for a place to eat stay away from the area of Mykonos called Little Venice which I assume gets its name from the buildings that are directly exposed to the water and offer fabulous views of the bay from their balconies. Where a meal can set you back , €62,50, for two.

It is mainly known for its overwhelming number of beaches where most visitors go. However, be aware that in and around the rocky areas you uncover the obviously wild nightlife that Mykonos houses in peak periods, condom packets, broken bottles, and other miscellaneous debris littering the front. This is quite a contrast to the streets and harbour area which is spotlessly clean.

A close beach to the town of Mykonos is just down a hill once you pass the windmills. Follow road round and down a hill and there is a beach with a nice restaurant on. Shop/hotel over road for cold drinks etc

Nauplion



Nafplio is a seaport town in the Peloponnese in Greece that has expanded up the hillsides near the north end of the Argolic Gulf.

Follow Nauplion Promenade along the coastline for some for the best views of Nafplio, as well as the Arcadia mountains, Bourtzi fortress, Arvanitia beach, and Palamidi castle. The promenade stretches 1.1 km (0.7) along the along the water from the harbor to Arvanitia Square,

directly above the beach of the same name. At one point, marked by a lamppost, the promenade seems to lead straight into the water. Farther along, continue your walk by passing through a tunnel dug straight out of the rock. Several spots along the promenade offer steps down to the sea. Or walk along it until it ends, and take a dip at Arvanitia Beach.

Suggestions

Nauplion Promenade; The promenade of Nafplio is really special as the sea looks like a lake here and there is a beautiful castle in the middle of the sea. There are many cafes and restaurants as you walk along for that all important stop.

Palamidi Castle; Palamidi castle is a Huge fortress and one can easily spend 2-3 hours there. History is given in detail on the information board, make sure to read it, it adds to the charm of this place. The views from here are spectacular. However, there are 999 steps to get to it.

Archaeological Museum; Within walking distance of everything in the old part of the city, this small museum is thoughtfully laid out and has a nice collection.

Piraeus



Piraeus is a port city in the region of Attica, Greece. Piraeus is located within the Athens urban area, 12 kilometres southwest from its city centre,

Central Piraeus is not a place where visitors choose to linger because it's congested with traffic. Beyond its shipping offices, banks and public buildings are a jumble of pedestrian precincts. The most attractive quarter lies to the east around Zea Marina and touristy Mikrolimano harbour, which is lined with cafes, restaurants and bars.

Suggestions

There is a land train for a trip around Piraeus.

Archaeological Museum of Piraeus; The museum had an interesting exhibition based on Piraeus and the impact war had on the community. However the main attraction is upstairs! They have multiple bronze statues of Athena that you can view.

Church of Saint Nicholas; An old, ancient Greek looking church devoted to Saint Nicolas.

Giorgos Karaiskakis Stadium; This stadium is probably the best stadium of Greece. Build in 2004 for the Olympic Games.

Museum of Olympiacos; A must for any sports fans. The trophies are fantastic and there is a dedication for the supporters who died in the 1982 tragedy there.

Nautical Museum of Greece; Its a must see museum for people who love maritime and the sea. The visitor may find rare, old but well preserved equipment related to ships and maritime.

Piraeus is your port of call for **Athens**.

Patmos



Patmos, an Aegean island in the north of Greece's Dodecanese island group, is a significant Christian pilgrimage site.

Suggestions

Monastery of St. John; Proud monastery sit enthroned on a hill in Patmos since 9 century's, with a fantastic landscape; The apostle St John lives here in exile and wrote the Apocalypse, his spirit revelation.

Chora Patmos; Get lost in the narrow lanes as you walk around the Monastery. Marvel at the icons at the museum (4 euro fee, best in the morning). Get a Greek coffee and a dessert at Stoa bar.

Patmos Windmills; The three windmills of Patmos are located just below the Chora. There are beautiful views of Patmos, Skala, surrounding area and provide great photo opportunities. They may not be as famous as the ones in Mykonos, but they are in better condition since their restoration in 2010.

Cruise Destinations

Beaches

For tan-seeking sunbathers: The beach in Kámpos with sea sports facilities and marvellous fish tavernas is the most cosmopolitan one.

Psili Ammos (literally meaning "thin sand") will offer you an off-the-beaten-track experience as it is accessible only by boat.

Váya is definitely the choice for cool and not very salty waters.

Rhodes



Rhodes is the largest and most popular island of Dodecanese. The island is mostly famous for the romantic Old Town and the amazing beach resorts.

The Old Town is among the best-preserved Medieval Towns of Europe, with strong walls, an impressive castle, paved paths and elegant stone mansions. A drive around the island will bring you to magnificent beaches, impressive sightseeing and picturesque villages. A lovely place is Lindos village with the Acropolis on top. The most tourist places are located

close to Town, but you can also find many secluded places for total privacy around the island.

The Ships berth literally on the edge of the Old Town.

Suggestions

The hoho from the port is €12pp.

There are many interesting sightseeing options; it is a place with long history and rich tradition. The Old Town of Rhodes is among the best-preserved Medieval towns in Europe and impresses visitors with the romantic atmosphere. The Old town is just a couple of minute walk away and you are right in the heart of it straight away. Walk along the narrow paved streets, visit the Venetian Castle and the Byzantine churches, stroll around the old port and you will have the feeling that the Knights of Saint John will appear at the next corner. About 10-15 minutes to walk to the Palace of the Grand Masters. It is only 6 euros entrance fee. The shops are lovely nice old cobbled streets, walk the old street of the knights.

Other interesting places to visit are the Acropolis of Lindos, the Aquarium, the Monastery of Filerimos and the Valley of Butterflies.

Due to the large size of the island, visitors will find numerous beaches for all preferences, even totally secluded places. Prassonissi, Ixia and Theologos are popular beaches for windsurfing and kite surfing.

If you want a swim there is a tiny beach right in front of the wall where you walk through into town, great for a quick dip in the sea.

Santorini



When you arrive by sea, there is no confusing the island of Santorini. Dazzling white house's cling to the edge of vertical, rocky cliffs against azure blue waters. The most southern of the Cyclades islands, it is surrounded by Thirasia and Aspronisi, which were once part of a large volcanic island. Considered by many to be the site of the "Lost City of Atlantis", this magical little island glimmers from the fading sun as many watch it's decent from the numerous bars and cafés at the water's edge.

If this is new port for you and you are thinking of doing something: Start with the sail in, this is spectacular sailing into a Caldera, surrounded by sheer cliff faces with white house perched on the top of towering cliffs and sides is worth seeing. Some speculate that this is the origin of Homer's account of Atlantis sinking into the sea.

So, Santorini; there are two ports for this port, one for excursions and one for the main town, Fira. In both cases this is a tender port. The tendering is done by local boats and not the ships. The ship will anchor below Fira.

The one for the early excursions, The official name of this cruise port is Skala. It became a tourist hub of sort, a small town of seaside cafés, boat rental agencies and trinket shops.

Excursions; you are tendered to the main port, Il Porto Di Atinios, about 15Km from Fira, this is the only place where coaches can get near the Caldera and your ship. You go on your excursion and are dropped back in Fira to spend some of your own time browsing the shops, a spot of lunch or drink looking over the caldera at your ship below and you are also given a cable car ticket for making your own way back to the ship. There is one excursion that does drop you back at the port and you are tendered back to the ship. From where you are dropped in Fira it is about 500mts into town.

For all those not on an excursion then; you are tendered to Fira where you now have a choice, walk to the top, about a mile and up 300+ steps, ride a donkey to the top, again up those 300+ steps, bumping into walls, do they have fleas, now would be a good time to mention if you walk up there is the donkey poo on the steps and of course dodging the donkeys going up and down, or there is the cable car. These are the only ways to get from the port of Fira to the town of Fira. I would opt for the cable car. But this brings its own problems.

The cable car: cost €6pp single, there are no return tickets. There are 12 cars, 6 at the top and 6 at the bottom and these take about 5 mins for a round trip. Each car takes 6, so that is a maximum of 36 people heading in one direction at one time. With let us say, 2000 passengers getting off your ship and there could well be a queue for going up and of course for coming back down. Then of course are there other ships in port. When we stayed in Santorini the average was 3 ships and at one time there was 6. We are not talking small ships we are talking Costa, Celebrity, Thomson and of course IOTS ships. So plan, get off very early for that guaranteed place in the cable car and think about what time you are going to make that journey back down to be tendered back to your ship. I am not trying to put you off, Santorini is a beautiful place and worth getting off the ship for, just plan your getting off and on.

Suggestions

The town of Thira is perched on the rim of the caldera, with buildings clinging like limpets to the sheer cliffs. The port is at the bottom of the cliff and there is a choice of ways to get to the top, cable car, donkey (mules) or steps (589 and mule poo). I know this as it tells you on the last step when you reach the top, and the same to coming down.

Cruise Destinations

The view when you reach the top is quite something and it's only then that you can see the once volcano spread across in front of you. There is a smaller island in the centre and that is in fact the centre of the volcano and a larger one a little further out.

It's got cool bars and chic boutiques aplenty. And it's not short on jewellery shops - Thira has 40 or so selling designer bling. In the culture stakes, you can take your pick from the Museum of Prehistoric Thira, the Thira Archaeological Museum and the frescoed Orthodox Metropolitan Cathedral.

Not to put you off but, another thing to be aware of is the streets of Thira. The streets are about 10ft wide, they average 3 cruise ships visits a day visited and at one time when we visited there were 6, yes 6 cruises ships. Even if only a 1/3rd of the passengers disembarked, can you imagine 5000+ tourist in a small area,

The local bus service is easy, Thira is its main station and every bus goes from here to the outlining areas and from those back to Thira, so you cannot get lost. The bus station is on the main road in Thira, a short walk from the top of the cliffs. When you get off the cable car at the top, turn right and then take the second left onto the main road the bus station is just minutes away to your right. Just ask for the bus going to where you want to go.

For Oia the bus ride is about 50 minutes.

Oia (pronounced 'ee-yah')

Wonderful Oia, with its views across the caldera. Oia is the home of Santorini's most famous snapshot - a blue-domed church that's graced countless holiday brochure covers. It is also the place to catch Santorini's legendary sunsets.

When you get to Oia, use the public conveniences (if you need to!) by the shops where the busses drop off. Do not use the "proper" toilets well into the town as cubicles are minimal and queues are maximum. This would waste most of your free time in this beautiful town.

There is a boat that takes you to Oia from Thira port. There is a ticket office by the entrance to the cable car on the dock; it's a large motorboat that holds about 50 people. It is €14pp which includes the bus back to Thira. The boat drops you below Oia where there is a bus that takes you up and drops you in the town where you can have a walk around. Or, if you are feeling fit there are the steps from the harbour to the top of the cliff face. There you can look around for a while then there are hourly busses back to Thira.

Akrotiri

A bit like Pompeii, it was frozen in time by ash from a volcanic eruption.

Wine Trips

If you must do one then try for any that goes to Santo winery, just above the main port. Along with your wine you are given olives, cheese and bread and all are very welcome and delicious. This winery also gives you a great photo opportunity as it is perched on the edge of the cliff with terraces overlooking the caldera.

The volcano walk is good, although strenuous. On arrival in a little bay you walk through several moored boats to reach land and meet your guide. You then walk up the volcano to the top. At the top there are a few active fumaroles. It is a tough, hot climb up and the equally hot and almost as tough walk/scramble down. You then re-join your boat and sail a short distance round New Island to an area of thermal springs where the more energetic can enjoy a swim,

Cruise Destinations

Beaches

The best beaches are on the eastern side of Santorini. This area is green and not like the western side that overlooks the Caldera. Try *Kamari*, this sandy stretch was named one of the Cyclades' best beaches by the Daily Telegraph.

Enjoy, it is a stunning place and if you are there for the sunset, fantastic. Can I suggest that if your cruise ship has an outside dining area, book it for the sail out.

Skiathos



Skiathos, a Greek island in the northwest Aegean Sea and it is among the most popular islands of Greece. Famous for the golden beaches. Skiathos is a favourite destination for both youth and families. The Town is the centre of activities on the island, where visitors head in the evenings to enjoy a relaxing drink.

Suggestions

Monastero di Panagia Evangelistria; It's a peaceful monastery up the hill, it was built 300 years ago by monks. The first Greek flag was woven at the monastery and you can see it at the monastery museum.

Agios Nikolaos Church and Clock Tower; Worth all the steps to reach the top and see the view of Skiathos Town. It is of course where Sophie sent the letter off at the beginning of *Mama Mia*.

Beaches

The most popular beaches are located on the southern side of the island.

Lalaria Beach; accessible only by boat trip that also goes to the Medieval Castle of the island.

Koukounaries Beach; Amazing place with crystal clear water, golden sands like powder, very good service, a lot of bars on the beach.

Souda Bay (Crete)



Souda Bay is a bay and natural harbour near the town of Souda on the northwest coast of the Greek island of Crete. The bay is about 15 km long and only two to four km wide, and a deep natural harbour.

There are reminders of World War action at the cemetery; and across the bay the fortified Island of Souda was once a battleground between the Greeks and the Ottomans. But if you cannot imagine such bloodied action, perhaps you can picture Roger Moore's high speed boat chase in *For Your Eyes Only*, which was filmed on location here.

West of Souda is the charming old Venetian town Chania - or Hania if you prefer. Cobble streets lined with colourful Venetian townhouses zigzag downward toward the harbour, which has a touch of Florence or Venice about it. Browse a mix of museums, churches and crafts en route, then walk the harbour wall to the oldest lighthouse in the world. End your day with a raki in a waterside café.

If you are thinking about Knossos then it is worth knowing the distance from Souda Bay to Knossos is about 130Km, 2 hrs.

Cruise Destinations

Suggestions

The city bus to Chania is €1.70pp single, a taxi €10 and the hoho €7.

Chania Old Town; is a delightful small town with a pretty harbour lined with small bars and cafes. It has huge Renaissance Venetian walls on three sides and lots of narrow streets with some beautiful Venetian and Turkish buildings in them. The town provided a frequent shuttle from Souda Bay for €1.70pp single (even on Easter Sunday). If you are interested in Venetian history, this is a place to go.

Chania Archaeological Museum; this museum is easy to find and the staff are very friendly. It has a flat entry and disabled access. There is also reduced entry rates for €2. The museum is relatively small but the building itself is very unique.

Botanical Park & Gardens Of Crete; A beautiful park with an important message for everyone. Make time to listen and wander, take in the amazing diversity of plants, and sample the delicious food served on site.

Syros



Syros, or Siros or Syra is a Greek island in the Cyclades, in the Aegean Sea. It is located 78 nautical miles south-east of Athens.

Lovers of the elusive 'real Greece' pretty much all agree that the island of Syros is a special place. The town of Hermoupolis is the capital of the Cyclades and one of the most architecturally fascinating ports in the Mediterranean, a living museum with some of the most beautiful 19th Century buildings in Greece. It is also one of the most

cosmopolitan towns in the Greek islands.

Suggestions

Ermoupolis City Hall; The staircase from Mousouli square up to the townhall is 15,5 meters broad. So, climb the steps and have a look inside, even to drink a coffee in a hot summer day! Designed by the famous architect Ernst Ziller, the man who glorified the classical style

Saint Nicholas Church; A very impressive orthodox church with class and style. Is opposite a park and very close to Vaporia. Worth's visiting it.

Beaches

Galissas Beach; Is the best beach in Syros. It is sandy with cafes and bars and is shallow and very suitable for children. Even when is windy here is calmer. There are many restaurants nearby.

Kini Beach; It's a sandy beach with a nearby restaurant and bar across the road. 10 minutes from Syros. There are no water sports facilities, but it is good for a swim and a relaxing.

Volos



Volos is a coastal port city in Thessaly situated midway on the Greek mainland.

Volos is one of the largest and most attractive cities in Greece as well as one of the country's most prominent ports. The modern-day city, built near the site of ancient Iolcos, dominates the region of Magnesia from its position at the foot of Mount Pelion overlooking the Pagasetic Gulf.

Suggestions

Archaeological Museum; Greece has many museums, and they all seem to be worth visiting. This small museum has incredibly old and beautiful pottery and figurines from the Neolithic era. Most of the signs are in both Greek and English, and there is a nice touch-screen guide in the entry hall. Give yourself at least an hour to take it all in. Entry fee €4pp is very reasonable. (2016)

St. Nicolas Metropolitan Cathedral; This church is a must see. It's in the main shopping square and amazing.

Agiou Konstantinou Park; Any time of the day it is a nice place to walk and enjoy. Start to visit the church and finish with a coffee for a perfect stroll.

Zakinthos (Zante)



Call it Zakynthos or Zante, this most southerly of the Ionian chain is still one of the most ruggedly beautiful of all the Greek islands. Springs run down from the mountains in the north to the lush green valleys below and the flat plains in the south feed an abundance of wildflowers which add even more colour to the landscape.

There are also lovely sandy beaches tucked away in hidden coves, some only reachable by boat. Others are used by the endangered Loggerhead sea turtles as their main nesting areas. The main town and cruise port, Zakynthos, is typically Greek with blindingly white houses and bar after bar along the harbourfront. It was destroyed by an earthquake 50 years ago and, although it has a couple of good museums (including one on Greek literature), you have to travel inland to find historic sites such as the Venetian fortress thought to have been built within the walls of a long-gone acropolis. Argassi and Tsilivi, the most popular beach resorts, are each just three miles away from the port.

Cruise ships berth/tender into Zante town. The main town and cruise port, Zakynthos, is typically Greek with blindingly white houses and bar after bar along the harbour front.

Suggestions

As you reach town there are lots of tours being offered and a land train €6pp for a 30 mins tour of the town. If you would prefer to see the town on foot take a leaflet anyway, it has a good map of the streets and what is on offer.

For the town tourists, this is any easy DIY. Crossing the road from the port you are in Solomon Square and from there a short walk to St Mark's Square and the start of the main shopping area. There is a lot on offer, tourist tat and some more worth looking at stuff. There are lots of small tavanias on the main street and on the coast street to find that bite to eat and a drink.

Cruise Destinations

Argassi and Tsilivi are the most popular beach resorts and are each just three miles away from the port.

Although it has a couple of good museums (including one on Greek literature), you have to travel inland to find historic sites such as the Venetian fortress thought to have been built within the walls of a long-gone acropolis.

There are also lovely sandy beaches tucked away in hidden coves, some only reachable by boat.

Go on a boat trip to Smugglers cove, one of the most photographed locations, not only in Zakynthos but the whole of Greece, this famous cove is hidden by imposing cliffs and is home to a shipwreck half buried on the beach. With crystal clear waters lapping on the beach it a striking image that will stay with you forever. This is a decent trip, but only go if the sea is like a millpond.

A visit by boat to the Blue Caves is worthwhile. Here you can marvel at the arches created by erosion over thousands of years and capture the amazing sight of the water reflecting a dazzling aquamarine and turquoise from the sea floor.

If you are looking for something to eat then try Spartakos, along the front. Recommended.

The nearest resorts, will be Kalamaki and Argassi and Laganas famed for its loggerhead turtles,

ITALY

Ancona



Ancona is a city on Italy's Adriatic coast and the capital of the Marche region. It's known for beaches, like Spiaggia del Passetto, and the hilltop Cathedral of San Ciriaco.

Split into two parts - the historic centre on Monte Guasco and the modern part on the coast - Ancona is a fascinating city.

Ancona is not on everyone's tourist itinerary and much of it is pretty grim.

Suggestions

Mole Vanvitelliana; this building is between the railway station and the port 15 minutes on foot. It's more interesting see it from outside.

Monumento ai Caduti; It is a First World War Memorial and is at the end of the Avenue of Victory. It is a very impressive monument with great views down to the shore and out across The Adriatic

Piazza del Plebiscito di Ancona; The square and surrounding streets are lovely filled with bars & restaurants and some fine old palazzo and is definitely worth a few hours of your time.

Bari



Bari is a port city on the Adriatic Sea, and the capital of southern Italy's Puglia region. Its maze like old town, Barivecchia, occupies a headland between 2 harbours.

Bari offers about a day's worth of sightseeing - that is, if you want to explore thoroughly, enjoy a long lunch and visit the local art gallery. If you have less time, you'll find that you can see Vecchia Bari - Old Bari - and the town's highlights in just a couple of hours. The interesting bits of town can all be visited on foot, though if you get bored of

trekking through the newer car-filled streets you could catch one of the local buses.

Suggestions

It is a pretty old city; you can do your own.

Try the HOHO outside the terminal, very interesting!

Basilica San Nicola: A great Church with rich historical background that is a must to see for all visiting Bari. Located in the centre, easy to reach.

Citta Vecchia: Old Bari is maze of narrow streets where you can discover many as 40 churches and chapels and 120 shrines. Easy to get lost! Locals making pasta, cleaning fish, religious shrines, it was not overly touristed or commercial.

Brindisi



This is an industrial port.

Like all ports, Brindisi has its seamy side, but it's also surprisingly slow paced and balmy, particularly the palm-lined Corso Garibaldi, which links the port to the train station, and the promenade stretching along the interesting seafront. The town was the end of the ancient Roman road Via Appia, down whose length trudged weary legionnaires and pilgrims, crusaders and traders, all heading to Greece and the Near East.

Suggestions

It is a couple of minutes' walk to the end of the dock, turn left and you are at the bottom of the main shopping street - Via Roma. The tourist books say the shops open at 9am, but many open at about 10am. The shops are typical high street stores.

At the corner there is a tourist train which, if there are enough passenger numbers will operate at 10 am, 11.15am and 1.30pm. The train tours the outskirts of the town, a photo stop, a complimentary ice cream and guide book for 15 euros.

Colonne Terminali della Via Appia; Standing at the top of a flight of steps, this ancient column supposedly marked the southern end of the Apennine Way.

Pontificia Basilica Cattedrale; is a church located within the small old town open square. A beautiful old façade, crypt, massive columns with high ceilings and intricately designed stained glass windows. There were also old paintings along the walls.

Crotone



Steeped in antiquity, the ancient port of Crotone on the very ball of the foot of Italy. Those of you who loathed maths at school may find it hard to forgive the fact it was home to Pythagoras (the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides).

Crotone's unspoiled centro storico, crowned by the castle of Charles V, lies uphill from the Old Port. Its winding alleyways are home to boutiques selling interesting local crafts. Must-sees include Le Castella, Crotone's other castle

built on a small island accessible by foot via a narrow causeway. Begun in the 4th century BC, the philosopher Pliny said that Hannibal constructed its first tower. The Capo Collona archaeological park is a short way along the coast. Its best-preserved and most impressive ruin is the Tavole Palatine, where knights gathered before setting off to the Crusades.

Fancy a bite? Not to be missed is quadraro, the local fish soup; the salty and affumicata ricotta called abbespata, the pecorino Crotonese and, most definitely, a glass (or two) of the full bodied Calabrian wine, Cirò DOC. This is the oldest wine in Europe, drunk by Olympic athletes in classical times.

View shore excursions

Suggestions

Da Capo Colonna a Le Castella; The first Temple to Hera on this site was built in 7 BC. Not much remains of this majestic structure, just one standing column of the Temple, and a few foundations of the surrounding structures.

Site is totally abandoned, but open, so no entrance fee, and not possibility to come nearer than some 5-8 meters to the ruins.

Castello di Carlo V; Massive castle with commanding view of the nearby seaport and the city. Like many castles, you only can visit the general outside area. But there is enough to allow your imagination to picture the history of the various battles.

Museo Archeologico Nazionale Di Crotone; Up on the hill in the old town near the castle the museum is on two floors, has a lift for disabled and explanations in English. Some lovely artefacts on show. The running Gorgon, the model boat and the gold diadem are worth the price of admission (which is very reasonable, anyway). Well presented with enough English to inform.

Ravenna



Ravenna is the capital city of the Province of Ravenna, in the Emilia-Romagna region of Italy.

It was once the capital of the Byzantine Empire in Italy, and it still has amazing mosaics recalling that heritage. Make sure you visit Dante's tomb, as well as the little pile of rubble where local residents hid his urn during WWII to prevent it from being damaged.

Suggestions

Basilica San Vitale; The two Basilica and mausoleum, museum, and Baptistery are superb. To think these buildings have survived 1500 years in such excellent condition. The interior is breath-taking as the octagonal plan and the mosaics are simply astonishingly beautiful, the chapels on the second floor very impressive.

Mausoleo di Galla Placidia; mosaics, translucent marbles, sepulchres make this grave an extremely intimate place, however it does get crowded and sometimes they enforce a 5 min visit.

Archiepiscopal Museum; Wonderful museum with the little mosaic chapel being the star of the museum. It has the advantage of being close so you don't need binoculars to see the detail. Shame that you are not permitted to take photos.

Taranto



Taranto is a coastal city in Apulia, Southern Italy. It is the capital of the Province of Taranto and is an important commercial port as well as the main Italian naval base.

Thanks to an illustrious Greek and Roman history, it has been bequeathed with one of the finest Magna Graecia museums in Italy. For this reason alone, it's worth a stopover.

Suggestions

Castello Aragonese; Definitely worth visiting if you're in Taranto, can only take a guided tour, so look at booking in advance if you can, it is very interesting. Heads up though: not easily accessible! Steep stairwells that are quite a task to conquer.

Museo Nazionale Archeologico; A wonderful museum full of memorable surprises, all laid out in chronological order and navigating the museum is straightforward. The jewellery is worth the visit alone, there is also plenty of it to see great exhibits. Just off the city centre, entrance fee is €5pp,

Trieste



Trieste is the capital city of the Friuli Venezia Giulia region in northeast Italy. Strangely, it is entirely surrounded by Slovenia.

Well worth a visit is Castello Miramare - a 19th century castle hewn from white Istrian stone, overlooking the blue waters of the Adriatic. Dominating the city is the fortress, Castello di San Giusto, where you can enjoy picturesque views from the adjacent memorial garden. Below the castle walls is the 14th century Cattedrale di San Giusto where the remains

of San Giusto (St Justus or Just) are held. If you're seeking a more laid back space to sip coffee and crunch on biscotti, then the Piazza dell'Unita d'Italia, at the waterfront, is ideal. The architecture will keep you occupied as you watch the world go by, or why not toss a coin into the quaint fountain nearby? The unique atmosphere of Trieste has a special kind of appeal. With the Slovenian border just a few miles away, it's no surprise that the Slovenian language is often heard.

Suggestions

Piazza dell'Unita d'Italia; This must be one of the most stunning squares in Europe, and one of the few open to the sea. A great piazza, very clean and well maintained. It is special just to walk or sit and watch people. The view of the ocean is very special and unique.

Miramare Castle; This is a must see if travelling to Trieste. Great excursion either by boat (in the summer) or by bus (in April), outside Trieste. Beautiful and romantic castle with breathtaking views over the Bay of Trieste. The gardens are maintained and it feels like such a beautiful and tranquil place.

Opicina Tramway; Well worth a visit on this historic tram. Stroll from the Piazza Unita dell Italiana to the tram and ride to the top for coffee and desserts. Stroll through the town or walk the bike path to the observatory. Stop at the obelisk and walk the scenic views and just relax. A great time. Cost €1.35pp (2016).

Venice



This World Heritage city is just about the perfect cruise call because everything you want to see is so easily accessible whether the ship docks just down from St Marks Square or further up the Grand Canal at the main Venice cruise terminal complex.

Cars are banned from the maze of narrow cobbled streets and 500 historic bridges within the city centre so there are just the two choices for getting around: the vaporetto (water-bus) network or just plain walking. A gondola ride is

really for fun and romance rather than transportation.

Start walking from St Marks Square, with its ancient Basilica, lavish Doges Palace and imposing bell tower, then follow signs for the shop-lined Rialto Bridge and the Bridge of Sighs. But wherever you walk, there are intriguing arty shops, museums and galleries plus some tasty cafés and restaurants along the way.

One thing about Venice, make sure you get up early, about 6:45am, to see the sail in, for many it is one of the best. For those in the know a balcony cabin on the starboard side is great for the sail in, so maybe a breakfast in the room is called for.

If you get a nice sunny early morning it can be beautiful, but it is quite a long run in and it is best to see it all if you can. The evening sail out can be nice too. You get to see the outer islands of the lagoon

Cruise Destinations

Now a good place to start planning your visit is here; <http://europeforvisitors.com/venice/articles/vi-index.htm>

If you are using a smartphone on a slow or expensive connection, try here;
<http://europeforvisitors.com/venice/mobile/>

Suggestions

The ship will dock on the northwest side of Venice, a little way from St. Mark's (the centre), near to Piazzale Roma, but it's easy to get there from the terminal. You can either go on the organised transport from the ship or you can DIY.



Normally you berth roughly where P2 is. From there you either take your ships tour from a little Jetty or make your own way into the centre.

The excursions go from the little Jetty.

I would add, smaller ships sometimes dock at San Basilio which is not near the people mover but close to several vaporetto lines

Ways to the centre:

P&O operated their own water shuttle service to St Mark's Square.

The P&O Shuttle from a little Jetty to the pontoon just beyond St Mark's Square costs £16pp for one day or £30pp for two days (2017) unlimited use. You buy your ticket on board & it is charged to your account. The advantage is they are regular and fast as only go from ship to pier. The drop off is just past the Doges Palace so just walk over the bridge to St Marks square.

There is also the Vaporettos (water buses) run from there frequently. The 24 hr Venice Pass on the water bus ticket costs €20 (2016) and just hop on and off the vaporetto when you want. Do check the direction the Vaporetto is going or you could find yourself heading off the wrong way.

You could pre buy vaporetto day tickets online; take the mono rail to the Piazza Roma, and then the vaporetto down the Grand Canal to St Mark's Square. Walked back to the Rialto Bridge and then take the vaporetto back the way you had come in.

One way is to get the 'People Mover' from the port to the Piazzale Roma - from here it is easy to get the Number 1 vaporetto which goes from here to Lido, along the Grand Canal passing under the Rialto Bridge and then across the lagoon to the much quieter and very relaxing Lido, where there are quiet coffee shops and a beach.

Come back on the Number 1 vaporetto and then get off at Rialto Bridge, or Accademia and following the high level signs, it is easy to find your way back amongst the alley ways to the Piazzale Roma to get the People Mover back to the port.

There is also the People Mover that goes to Piazzale Roma and costs €1.50 each way.

Cruise Destinations

As you come out of the cruise terminal there is a small tobacconist shop where you can buy the mover and water bus tickets and then by pass the massive queues at the people mover ticket machines. The gent is very friendly and speaks OK English. It gets you to the Piazza Roma, from here you can get the water bus to St Marks or better you can walk over the new bridge, it's an easy walk in passing the Rialto Bridge. The fare is cheap, the ride is quick, and the system meets modern accessibility standards.

Short video on People Mover: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g9ZyUw5SXbA>

There is an HOHO Boat, again close to the ship.



This will show you the stops.

This is the same company as you see in the U.K., the red open topped buses. A 24 hour hop on hop off ticket will cost you €20 but it will take you to a lot more places, including Murano for the glass, and a bit nearer to St Marks. They are slower though as it's a sightseeing boat rather than a shuttle, so you need to leave enough time for the route to take you back to the ship.

Just one word of caution with option with the HOHO. If you are on it around lunchtime the operators have their break, so you can be left 'shipwrecked' for about an hour. Just bear in mind there is a timetable they operate too so you may want to check that out first.

If you are feeling up for it you can also walk, about 40 mins stroll. It is a lovely wander past shops cafes and market stalls, you get to see the real Venice not just St Mark's square. It is really not far you can take your time window shopping and stopping for fresh fruit smoothy on route.

The P&O waterbus shuttle does not go down the Grand Canal, which is one of the "must do" things in Venice. The Vaporetto (waterbus) is better value as you then can go all over Venice.

The café in the museum on St Mark's Square is not expensive and has wonderful views across the square.

A gondola ride. The city of Venice sets official rates for gondola rides, which started at €80 for 40 minutes. Additional 20-minute increments are €40. After 7 p.m., the base rate climbs to €100, with €50 for an additional 20 minutes. Up to six people can share a gondola.

If you need to use the public toilets they are €1.50 and had a coin operated turnstile so make sure you have a bit of change on you.

If you are looking for somewhere to eat then Restorante Terrazzo, is recommended. It is on the Giudecca Canal. The quickest way to get there is from Piazza Roma get the No51 Vaporetto then get off at the Stop called Zattere, the Restaurant is then on your Left. Alternatively, from St Marks Square walk to the Academia Bridge, go over the bridge and keep walking straight on until you get to the Giudecca Canal, you will then see the restaurant on stilts over the water. The food is fantastic and it is not expensive.

Cruise Destinations

Excursions

If available then the trip to Murano and Burano. You visit the glass factory in Murano and watched the glass blowers. Burano is a very pretty little island with pastel coloured buildings, famous for their handmade lace.

ISRAEL

Israel is quite westernised compared to Egypt and some Arab countries, so no strict dress code needed (although I would cover shoulders and knees if visiting religious sites).

Ashdod



Ashdod is the sixth-largest city and the largest port in Israel

The Israeli immigration will come on board and every passenger whether on an excursion or not, have to be personally seen by them. It could well be an early start to the day.

Ashdod is just a satellite commuter town for people who work in Tel Aviv. However, from here there are excursions to Tel Aviv, Jaffa, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Massada, the River Jordon and the Dead Sea.

Tel Aviv is on the seafront and is an interesting place to go. It also has an artist's market.

Suggestions

Fashion Mall Ashdod; Outdoors, nice ponds, lively atmosphere. All types of shops clothes, shoes, accessories and food.

The Corinne Mamane Museum; fantastic small museum. upper floor is all about philistine archaeology. The lower floor-- a huge room with period costumes. audio provided, or even better call in advance and book a guide.

Haifa



Haifa is a northern Israeli port city built in tiers extending from the Mediterranean up the north slope of Mount Carmel.

Lots of very pretty gardens around the place. From here there are excursions to Nazareth and the Sea of Galilee.

Suggestions

Baha'i Gardens and Golden Dome; The gardens are magnificent and the view of Haifa and the port is worth going for.

Louis Promenade; This modern promenade connects the hotels along Panorama road with a great view of the Haifa bay (on a clear day one can see the Lebanese Mountains) - along the promenade there are some historical notes from the visit of the German Kaiser and some monuments (including an old canon).

The Israel National Museum Of Science; This museum constantly hosts very nice regular and changing exhibitions, making each visit unique. The place has a lot to offer to all ages - from 3 to 90.

MONTENEGRO

Bar



Bar is a coastal town and seaport in southern Montenegro. Bar represents a modern town that is expanding every day. Although it is a port town, it is amazingly clean and has many developed green areas.

Around it there are many tourist attractions. The old town of Bar, Haj Nehaj Fortress, with the remnants from the 15th century fortress and the castle of King Nikola, represent the historic and cultural monuments of this town. There's an Old Olive Tree that is more than 2000 years old and Skadar

lake, with one of the biggest habitats of birds, as well as a large number of monasteries and churches for the visitors who enjoy this type of tourism.

Suggestions

Old Fortress; Historical heritage with lot of interesting objects to see followed by the museum. The views from the fortress are spectacular. Small entrance fee,

Old Olive Tree; This Olive Tree is over 2000 years old. It is good for a couple of pictures but is it worth the €2 to see it ???. If you take the bus to get here, it's located two bus stops away from the Stari Grad bus stop.

King Nikola's Palace; The exhibits includes a collection of antiquities, folk costumes, royal furniture, and ship wreckage. You will not need a lot of time to walk through the site. There's a €1 entrance fee to walk through the Palace. However, it is free to walk through the surrounding park.

Kotor



Kotor is a fortified town on Montenegro's Adriatic coast, in a bay near the limestone cliffs of Mt. Lovćen. Characterized by winding streets and squares, its medieval old town has several Romanesque churches, including Kotor Cathedral. It's also home to the Maritime Museum, which explores local seafaring history.

The old Mediterranean port of Kotor, is in the Gulf of Kotor, one of the most indented parts of the Adriatic Sea, and sometimes referred to as the most-southern fjord in

Europe. Ruled by Venice for hundreds of years, this lovely coastal town's architecture bears heavy Venetian influences.

Surrounded by impressive walls, which have stood since medieval times, a stroll around the Old City will take you past historic buildings, crisscrossed with narrow streets and squares. The Cathedral of Saint Tryphon, constructed in 1166, is one of the oldest and most beautiful examples of Roman architecture along this coast.

Whatever you do, as long as it is clear, Kotor does get a lot of fog, do not miss the sail in, it is like sailing into a Mediterranean fjord. Even if you have a balcony get up on the open deck as you will be able to see both sides. The sail in normally takes about one and half hours so find yourself somewhere comfy to sit and just enjoy. The beautiful scenery and wondering at every twist and turn where the ship was heading for, at times it looked like you are heading straight for a mountain, then a small break would appear which the ship would neatly navigate into, opening up in the glistening still water with beautiful backdrops of high sided mountains, some green with vegetation, some white and sparse but all very breathtaking. You feel at times you could almost reach out and touch the pretty little houses and building clustered at the foot of the hills.

Cruise Destinations

One of those places that you may dock or tender.

Suggestions

You dock literally on the edge of the old town; again a walled city. A two minute walk to the right take you to the arched entrance to the town. What an enchanting place. It is a wonderful little port and the town itself is like stepping back to old Roman/Jerusalem-esque village. It is difficult to describe to you how pretty and unspoilt it is, walking through the squares and the small alleyways which have so much charm. It is very much like Dubrovnik old town but smaller, beautiful. Each and every twist and turn brings you into small squares, with lively cafes each having their own live music,

There are quite a few interesting buildings to see in the town as well as a selection of bars and restaurants. Take a walk to the city walls up to the church at the top. It's quite a steep climb in places but well worth it and the funicular railway is worth taking for the stunning views from the top. Even in October it can be very hot so take plenty of refreshments.

Careful, the bay of Kotor is surrounded by mountains so thunderstorms can strike at any moment.

SLOVENIA

Koper



Koper is a city in southwestern Slovenia. It is very small but very old and quaint town, but it's a place to wander, relax, have a coffee and chill out.

Suggestions

When you get off the ship there is a lift which will take you up to a small garden and from there it is a short walk to their main square. Leading from the square is an 'alleyway' with small shops and cafes which eventually opens out into

another open space with a fountain and the city walls.

If you then retrace your steps back to the main square and headed off to the left towards the sea front with some lovely gardens and a rather nice fountain. From there it is a short walk back to the ship

Koper Cathedral and Bell Tower; The outside is spectacular and the inside has some lovely features . It is worth a quick visit but you don't need too long.

Praetorian Palace; The building itself is very interesting from the outside. You can watch the different patterns on the facade. The interior is amazing as well. Take the tour if you have time.

Muda Gate; Modelled after an ancient triumphal arch, the gate was built by Koper podesta Sebastian Contarini. Today, the Muda Gate remains the only preserved city gate out of the former twelve.

Vinakoper; Vinakoper is a biggest wine cellar and wine producer in Slovenian Istria. They offer guided tours through the cellar with wine tasting.

Portorož



Portorož is a resort town on Slovenia's Adriatic coast. Its spas offer therapeutic treatments based on the mud and brine from the nearby Sečovlje Salina salt pans.

The central Portorož Beach is a wide, sandy stretch with wooden piers. The hilltop Church of St. Bernardin is a former monastery from the 15th century. To the south, Seča Park is home to Forma Viva, an area dotted with stone sculptures.

Suggestions

Salina Nature Park; The salt pans are today the largest of the coastal marsh wetlands (650 hectares). The variety of bird species in this area, from the aspect of nesting and wintering, is much larger than in any other comparable locality of its kind. At the entrance is free bike hire for tourists to cover the area.

Strunjan Nature Reserve; is a part of the Strunjan Landscape Park and encloses four kilometres along the northern coast of the Strunjan Peninsula between the Simon and Strunjan Bays.

Further Afield

Piran; One of the most photogenic cities in the Mediterranean, Piran has preserved its unsurpassed charm. You will feel as though you have stepped right into a picture postcard. You will be charmed by the narrow streets within the old town wall. This is about 4 Km, 10 mins away by local bus.

Istrian villages; The Piran countryside offers genuine experiences and it gives you a special feeling as if time has stopped. Old stone cottages sit high above the sea on the hilltops of Slovenian Istria. From here, you have a view of the sea and the Alps, olive groves, vineyards on steep hills and valleys strewn with orchards and vegetable gardens.

TURKEY

Dardanelles

The Dardanelles, a narrow 60-mile-long strip of water that divides Europe from Asia, has been of great strategic significance for centuries. Carefully secured by international treaty, it was the closing of the Dardanelles that eventually brought the Ottoman Empire into the war as a German ally at the end of October 1914.

On 19 February 1915, British and French ships began a naval assault on the Dardanelles. The fighting culminated in a heavy setback for the Allies on 18 March due to large losses from Turkish mines. Military landings on the Gallipoli peninsula followed on 25 April. Contained by the Ottoman defenders, a new assault began on 6 August. Each fresh attempt was defeated, and by mid-January 1916, all Allied troops had been evacuated and the attack on the Dardanelles abandoned.

Cesme



The Çeşme Peninsula, due west of İzmir, and its towns of Çeşme, Alaçatı and Ilica, is a major regional holiday destination. This resort town on the Aegean Coast is all about the water and attracts all types of surfers from all over the world: wind surfers, kite surfers, surf surfers. If you can surf it, you'll probably want to surf it in Cesme.

Suggestions

Cesme Castle; if you want to rest from the hustle and bustle of shops in the pedestrian zone of Cesme, head for Cesme castle on the hill slope near the harbour. It houses a small museum which consists of an archaeological section. It is also possible to make the round tour of the castle walls. From the upper parts of the ramparts, there are nice views of the harbour with Greek Island of Chios as a backdrop.

But this port is all about its beaches which are golden, the ocean is warm, and the atmosphere is posh but friendly.

Istanbul



There are loads to do here; it's a fantastic and interesting city. But you only have time to get a glimpse of all the available sites. There is a good tram service which is cheap and runs from the cruise terminal, it is cool and clean and only costs 3 Turkish Lira (2013) and takes you straight to the main sites with a plan of the route in English to help you.

If you are not doing an organised excursion then to get the most out of the main sites then do your research. If you are not into long queues then think about an excursion, most of

these have the entrance fee included and of course you skip the queue.

Suggestions

The Hippodrome is a great place to start and is pretty amazing to see. The Blue mosque is incredible, especially the 6 minarets that dominate the city's skyline, be aware that is only accessible when not used for religious services. Then you have Aya Sofya and the Topkapi Palace with its exhibition of amazing jewels. Do the Topkapi Palace independently. You buy tokens (in local currency) from the little 'sentry-box' kiosk at the tram station. Opening time: Open daily except Tuesdays from 9am to 5pm, Admission: 20 YTL. A separate ticket is required for the harem. The Topkapi is closed on Tuesdays. The Basilica Cistern is well worth a visit but you have to pay by Turkish Lira as they won't take Euros or Credit Cards. These should be at the top of your list when visiting Istanbul.

If you're a fan of shopping then the Grand Bazaar is brilliant. Some people are not fans of this area as they feel a little overwhelmed by the amount of stores and the bartering that can take place with tourists. It does not open on Sundays and closes Saturday evenings.

If a little hungry the restaurants on Galata bridge over river, they have good seafood.

Cruise Destinations

The beauty of having an overnight stay in Istanbul on a cruise itinerary is that you get to explore the city when the sun goes down. It's a great place during the day but at night, the skyline is beautiful and very impressive. The suspension bridge that separates the continents of Europe and Asia is a big attraction but at night it's even better because it is lit up beautifully and there are often fireworks during the heavy tourism periods as the lights of the bridge change colour. If possible try to see sunrise or sunset looking over river as really good shots/photos/views of shadows of mosques and lovely buildings.

Kusadasi



Kusadasi itself is very pleasant to walk around lots of Bazaars and shops to wander around. It is just a short walk from the ship into the town with lots of shopkeepers peddling their wares; ignore the shops by the docking area too expensive. It is very good for leather goods. In the Bazaars they start high with the prices - barter and aim to pay a third of the original asking price.

Suggestions

There is a little fort just to the right and turning left brings you down to the sea front and the marina has some nice restaurants. When you leave the Port area turn left and walk up the road, there is a beach, just before you reach the supermarket.

If you want to go to the beach you can catch a local Dolmus/Bus for a few euros. Ladies Beach and Pigeon Island are about 10 mins ride away.

However, KUSADASI is normally your port of call for Ephesus. When you walk out of the port gates there are loads of taxi's offering trips to Ephesus, they drop the price as you walk away.

Ephesus is a brilliant place, such a lot to see; you probably need a full day there. However, if you are visiting Ephesus yourself by taxi the entrance fee has to be paid in New Turkish Lira, they do not accept Euros but all the shops/bazaars will take anything - Euros or US Dollar.

For a DIY then Ephesus Shuttle dot com are highly recommended by travellers. They charge you US\$39pp or whatever the equivalent is in Euros. It's a small shared private tour - they take no more than 12-15 people on small buses with a private guide. It is about 25 mins to Ephesus and you get a running commentary all the way. When you get to Ephesus they take you to the Top Gate so all of your walking is downhill. These are quite spectacular ruins. The guide explains it all the way through, it also includes entrance to the Terraced Houses. The guide can keep you in the shade as it is a small group and you can avoid the big queues as would be the case with larger tours. You also stop off at one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world on the way back - temple of Artemis which is just a column in the middle of a field but they only stop 10mins so you can take a photo. The best thing about this tour is it is just a four hour trip, so you are back to the Ship and Kusadasi for 12.30 lunch. They do time the tour to suit your ships arrival time though if it is not a full day.

You just email them and tell them what ship and day you will be arriving; give them your names. No payment is required upfront, just your confirmation that you want to go.

Cruise Destinations

Marmaris



Marmaris is a Mediterranean resort town along the Turkish Riviera (also known as the Turquoise Coast) with a busy, pebbly beach and long seafront promenade.

A gorgeous backdrop of pine-clad mountains looms behind the seaside resort of Marmaris in southwest Turkey.

Marmaris offers an abundance of fast food restaurants, the restored castle of Suleyman the Magnificent and an appealing cobblestoned old quarter. Outside the busy

town, coves and bays of the Datça Peninsula make lovely daytrip destinations for those travelling by boat.

Suggestions

Dancing Fountains; Situated in the centre of the town. Very well kept area with beautiful garden areas. Amazing fountains day or night.

Carian Rock Tombs; A great way to spend finding out about the history of Turkey with a boat ride around the river to see the tombs. The boat stops for a while and you are given history of the tomb.

Marmaris Museum; It shows you about the history around Marmaris and the view from the castle over the city is excellent.

Beaches

Marmaris Beach; A nice beach with clear waters and a great view of pine covered mountains. Very clean beach and sea. Well looked after.

Icmeler Beach; beautiful beach sandier at one end.

BLACK SEA & BOSPORUS

BULGARIA

Burgas



Burgas is the fourth largest city in Bulgaria situated 130 km from Varna.

For most visitors, the port city of Burgas (sometimes written as 'Bourgas') is no more than a transit point for the more obviously appealing resorts and historic towns further up and down the coast. If you do decide to stop over, you'll find a lively, well-kept city with a neat, pedestrianised centre, a long, uncrowded beach, a gorgeous seafront park, and some interesting museums.

Suggestions

Try the tour to Nessebar and Pomorie. After a 45 min drive you arrive in Nessebar, a world heritage site and visit various buildings, this is followed by the salt museum and finally St George's monastery.

UKRAINE

Odessa



Odessa is a port city on the Black Sea in southern Ukraine. It's known for its beaches and 19th-century architecture.

From where you berth it is a short walk to town, but easier to take the shuttle. Lots of places will not take euros so it is better to get some Ukrainian money.

Suggestions

The Opera House is worth a look around and the cathedral, especially the fantastically decorated crypt!

Deribasovskaya Street; This is a lovely area and the street is for pedestrians. So you can amble down the perfect cobbled Street and either window shop or sit in one of the many bars and eating places.

Primorsky Boulevard; The wide, pedestrian friendly walkway is lined with benches, covered with trees with views of the harbor on one side, the Potemkin Stairs in the middle (sometimes with the funicular rail running to get to the bottom. Pleasant place to stroll.

Potemkin Steps; It's a giant stairway in Odessa, Ukraine. The stairs are considered a formal entrance into the city from the direction of the sea and are the best known symbol of Odessa. If going up the Potemkin Steps try and avoid the men at the top who try to place eagles on your shoulders for a photo opportunity.

Yalta



Yalta is a resort city on the south coast of the Crimean Peninsula surrounded by the Black Sea.

Yalta is a city on hills and you better like steps, lots of them.

Suggestions

Walk along the promenade to the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral (golden onion type domes on top).

There is a cable car, more like a builder's bucket, that takes you to the top of the hill where there is some lovely views from the top. Only 2 can get in each cab and you have to be pretty nifty to get on and off, an experience for the brave.

Nikita Botanical Gardens; These garden are an absolute must the grounds are well kept and well presented the flowers are amazing and the water displays are amazing as well.

Lenin Embankment; The Yalta embankment is amazing place which has connected history and the modern. The beauty of old buildings and modern show-windows of restaurants and shops.

The local McDonald has Wi-Fi but will not take euros.

NORTH AFRICA

MOROCCO

Agadir



Agadir, a city along Morocco's southern Atlantic coast, in the foothills of the Anti-Atlas Mountains, is the capital of Agadir-Ida Ou Tanane province.

In the 60s, an earthquake devastated this African port. Since then, it has been rebuilt as a stylish resort, the 'Miami of Morocco'. Ancient ways, however, are never far from the surface

The nearest ship's berth is about a mile and a half away, the second berth even further. Most cruise lines will supply a shuttle bus that takes you to the promenade. It is then a lovely walk along the front (not very Moroccan, more European)

Suggestions

At the shuttle drop off place, you will find lots of taxis offering to do a tour.

Souk El Had d' Agadir; If visiting the Kasbah, then it is advised that you have some small value notes or coins, euros or sterling, with you. Someone will attach themselves to you either to show you round, or offer to take a photo etc - and they expect a tip. You do not really need them. But, just a few coins make them happy. Try and get to Gate 6. This is where all the fabric and leather can be found and be prepared to haggle to get the price down.

Seafront promenade; Lovely promenade along a golden beach. Used by the locals and tourists alike. Be prepared to be pestered by street vendors though, it can become quite annoying!

Marina D'agadir; Such a lovely place to visit. The shops are smashing, nice restaurants around a small harbour full of kinds of boats. Look over the edge and see all the little fish.

Crocoparc; Beautiful park with lots of crocodiles and a very good guide. Feeding time is noon.

Casablanca



This is a love it hate it sort of place. The port itself is an industrial one and very busy, although there is a good view of the Mosque in the near distance.

The entrance to the port is crowded with young males (probably trying to find a way into Europe) and can be intimidating particularly for female tourists.

The city is dilapidated by European standards and is chaotic. The bazaars are interesting but the vendors are very intrusive and many find this very off putting. At all times you have to be aware that you have entered a totally different culture and lifestyle.

Many people have taken the shuttle bus into town, stayed on the bus and went straight back to the ship

However, if you are thinking about going walk try and grab another couple to join with you [safety in numbers], away from the sea front local kids are known to throw stones at westerners.

Cruise Destinations

Suggestions

Most tourists agree do a planned excursion. If you are thinking of a DIY excursion here, a word of warning. There are lots of touts offering taxis for sightseeing for €20pp, later they ask ridiculous amounts of money to bring you back.

The mosque is impressive but non-muslims are not allowed inside.

A visit to Rick's café (obviously a mock up) is a popular attraction.

Excursions

The Casablanca Highlights: First stop is the Mosque which is fascinating, beautiful and really well worth visiting. Next was the seaside area where you can get out of the coach and have a walk along the sea front. Then it is onto the bazaar - nothing exceptional but no hassle from stall holders. The final stop was a Cathedral with enormous and famous stained glass windows. Beware of the toilets they are a hole in the ground and smell really awful. If you are given chance to go to the "American" toilets these are normal ones and spotlessly clean.

Tour to Rabat: It is a much cleaner city especially around the Palace, the Kings Mosque and King Hassan's mausoleum.

Tangiers



Not the nicest of places with many cruisers advising that there is nothing worth seeing.

There will be warnings delivered to your cabin regarding safety in Morocco and if you want to do something then you really need to book a trip.

Suggestions

It is a long uphill hike into town and even just leaving the port area you will have to run the gauntlet of the hawkers. There are the normal the 'tat stalls' and it is doubtful if they have sold anything in the last 10 years. Everything is faded with the sun and dusty and grimy.

Try the tour to Tetouan. It is a one hour drive to your destination of Tetouan and worth every minute. The drive takes you through arid countryside with Berber men and women carrying shopping or selling vegetables and fruit at roadside stalls all backed by distant views of the Riff Mountains. On arrival you walk a short distance to the entrance to the Medina - a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This is one of the smallest medinas in Morocco and is one of the few cities that have been relatively untouched by the outside world over the centuries. You finally arrive at a café. Here you are served with pastries and mint tea before continuing your tour.

Taroudant



Taroudant is a city in the Sous Valley in southern Morocco. It is situated east of Agadir.

Taroudant (also spelled Taroudant) is sometimes called 'Little Marrakesh', but that description doesn't do the Sous Valley trading centre justice. Hidden by magnificent red-mud walls, and with the snow-capped peaks of the High Atlas beckoning beyond, Taroudant's souqs and squares have a healthy sprinkling of Maghrebi mystique. Yet it is also a practical place, a market town where Berbers trade the

produce of the rich and fertile Oued Souss plain.

There aren't any must-see sights. Instead, the medina is a place to stroll and linger. The two souqs are well worth a browse, more laid-back than Marrakesh, but with an atmosphere of activity that is missing in Agadir. With the little-explored western High Atlas.,

Be self-aware and be very careful how you dress, remove any gold jewellery and do not carry a handbag. Also try and keep your camera and money concealed from view most of time.

Suggestions

It is not a good idea to wander around without the big tour guide as your minder. So worth looking at a ship's tour,

Taroudant Caleche Carriage Tours; Haggle on the cost before you get in but lovely way to travel and not much more expensive than a taxi. With good haggling skills expect to pay about 100 to 150 MAD for a 1 hour tour for a family of four around the city. The driver will start at 300 - 350 MAD.

Stadtmauer Taroudant; The wall surrounds the entire city and is largely intact. You can walk the rampart and part of the wall if you climb the stairs at the Bab Kasbah entrance.

NORTHERN EUROPE

NORWAY



It is a beautiful part of the world. So tranquil, fantastic scenery and you could actually smell the fresh air. The Fjords are stunning just make sure you are awake early to watch the wonderful scenery as you go through the Fjords.

There is something very mystical about sailing through the Norwegian Fjords on a cold and still morning and is one of the great maritime experiences.

Formed during the Ice Age when the glaciers retreated, the deep valleys and narrow inlets were flooded with seawater creating these natural wonders. Thanks to the warmth of the *Gulf Stream* they are virtually ice free and easily explored.

General Information: Norway is very expensive. 35NK for a punnet of Strawberries, 109NK for a Burger and Coke, chips extra. It was 8.60NK for £1, so that makes the burger £12.60. (2012 prices)

VAT Refunds

It is worth knowing that if you spend a minimum of 315NK at the same shop then you could get a VAT refund. If shopping, then tax-free cheques can be obtained from any of the shops carrying the sticker 'Tax free for tourists'. These shops save visitors 11-18% of the price paid by residents. There are 2 main companies operating this scheme - and they display their logos proudly at every shop which they deal with, so be sure to look either on/near the till or in the window or doorway to see which company the shop in question deals with.

So, when you make a purchase, please make sure to ask for (and receive) the special receipt and accompanying leaflet/form. Refunds are paid on return to the cruise ship. Keep your paperwork safe, and then before lunchtime on the day or your final port of call in Norway complete the form (usually just fill in one form and take all the receipts).

The 'officials' usually have a desk in the reception area of the ship at or about lunchtime on the day of your last port of call in Norway, and they are normally there for about 2 hours. There should be a notice about it in the onboard newspaper, if not just ask reception. Sometimes they ask for your passport (your passport number will have to be written on the form), and they will usually offer either to refund it direct to your credit card (or debit card), or money. It is very quick and painless exercise - and well worthwhile.

So, just watch out for those tax refund company stickers in the shops, and have a great cruise.

Clothing, take a mixture: Leaving for a trip to Llysfjord in Stavanger, it was damp, misty and cold and so warm clothing was called for, on returning 3 hours later it was 23C+ and they were sunbathing on Oriana.

THE FJORDS

The Aurlandsfjord (Flam)

The Aurlandsfjord is one of the most picturesque fjords in the world. It is a 17-kilometer arm of Norway's longest fjord, the Sognefjord (204 km). It starts at Flåm and ends at the mountain Beitelen Mountain, which separates the Aurlandsfjord from the Nærøyfjord.

It is surrounded by high mountains that reach heights of over 1,400 metres, the fjord is considered to be one of the most picturesque fjords in the world

Aurlandsfjord is located in the southern part of the county, in the middle of Western Norway. Although it is one of the smaller fjords, it is also one of the most picturesque. It's surrounded by steep-sided crystalline rock walls that rise up to 1,400 m from the sea and extend 500 m below sea level. Aurlandsfjord is also part of the World Heritage area surrounding the Naerøyfjord.

The Geirangerfjord (Geiranger)

A fairytale of a fjord. The deep blue UNESCO-protected Geirangerfjord is surrounded by majestic, snow-covered mountain peaks, wild waterfalls and lush, green vegetation. You would have to be exceptionally blasé if you failed to be impressed by this astounding creation of Mother Nature, emphasised by the will of man to maintain a foothold on the steep mountain sides and glean a living here.

Impressive waterfalls cast cascades of thundering water from almost vertical mountain sides among them the famous falls, De syv søstrene ("the Seven Sisters"), Friaren ("the Suitor") and Brudesløret ("the Bridal Veil"), and tease the cliffs with feather-light gossamer veils of mist whose mission seems to be to create a never-ending display of ever changing rainbows to fill you with delight and wonder.

Hardangerfjord (Rosedal)

If the Sognefjord is the King of the fjords of Western Norway, the Hardangerfjord is the Queen. Running from the Atlantic to the Hardangervidda plateau, the Hardangerfjord is the fourth longest fjord in the world, and the second longest fjord in Norway. Although the scenery often looks untamed and challenging, the area offers excellent infrastructure.

The Innvikfjorden (Olden)

Innvikfjorden is a small arm of Nordfjord that is approximately 4.5 km long and passes Innvik, after which it is named. Nordfjord, located in western Norway, is astonishingly beautiful and diverse. You'll find peaceful valleys and well-kept farms, as well as gleaming glaciers, foaming waterfalls, and towering, snow-capped mountains. The mountains plunge from altitudes of a few thousand metres, straight down into the seawater.

The Lustrafjorden (Skjolden)

The innermost arm of the Sognefjorden is called the Lustrafjord, located in the municipality of Luster. At its end, there is the village of Skjolden, which is an access point to Jotunheimen National Park.

Nærøyfjord (Cruise)

The Nærøyfjord is a fjord in the municipality of Aurland in Sogn og Fjordane, Norway. The Nærøyfjord in Sogn is one of the world's most beautiful and dramatic fjords. The name Nærøyfjord origin from the Norse god 'Njord', the God of the Seafarer and the sea.

Surrounded by towering mountains up to 1,700 metres high, this arm of the Sognefjord is amazingly beautiful.

The Nærøyfjord is the narrowest and best known of the many arms of the Sognefjord. With its steep mountainsides, hanging valleys, towering peaks, snowfields, waterfalls and small hamlets, this fjord is perhaps the most outstanding natural attraction in Norway.

The Nærøyfjord is 20 km long, only 250 metres across at its narrowest and a mere 12 metres at its shallowest.

Cruise Destinations

The surrounding mountains reach heights of 1,660 metres, and the fjord is one of multiple highlights on several tours.

The Nordfjord (Olden)

The Nordfjord is one of the famous fjords on the west coast of Norway. The fjord is the sixth longest in Norway and is 565 metres (1,854 ft) deep at the mouth. Nordfjord, located in western Norway, is astonishingly beautiful and diverse. You'll find peaceful valleys and well-kept farms, as well as gleaming glaciers, foaming waterfalls, and towering, snow-capped mountains. The mountains plunge from altitudes of a few thousand metres, straight down into the seawater. It flows past a lovely collection of picture-postcard coastal towns and villages on the way.

Oslofjord (Oslo)

The Oslofjord is an inlet in the south-east of Norway, stretching from an imaginary line between the Torbjørnshjær and Færder lighthouses and down to Langesund in the south to Oslo in the north. The 100-km-long Oslo Fjord is the scenic gem of the Oslo area. In the summer the fjord buzzes with life.

The Romsdalsfjord (Andalsnes) & (Molde)

Romsdalsfjord, in the northern region of western Norway, is one of the most beautiful areas of scenic Norway. Deep blue fjords, rolling emerald hills, crashing waterfalls and jagged, snow-capped mountains that tower high above the water. All the while passing charming villages where Vikings once ruled.

Romsdalsfjord cuts a deep gash (550 metres / 1,800 ft deep) into the earth, 88 km (55 miles) long, past Andalsnes and extending inland to Isfjorden. It also plays host to a number of small coastal towns and colourful fishing villages along the way.

The Sognefjord (Flam) & (Skjolden)

Norway's longest fjord, the Sognefjord, is located in the heart of Norwegian fjord country. It is often called "The King of fjords" and extends 204 km (127 miles) inland, has a maximum depth of 1,308 meters and the mountains surrounding the fjord tower to heights of 2,000 meters. The inner end of the Sognefjord is covered by Jostedalbreen, the biggest glacier in continental Europe.

This region where the Sognefjord meets the glaciers and Norway's highest mountains is considered one of the world's most beautiful travel destinations. The glaciers on the top of the mountains, down the steep mountainsides to green farmland and deep fjords will definitely make a lasting impression.

The Storfjorden (Hellesylt) & (Geiranger)

The Storfjorden in Sogn og Fjordane county is the fifth largest fjord in Norway. It stretches for 110 kilometres and entails 10 communes before splitting in two at Stranda.

The arm to the north becomes the Norddalsfjorden, whereas the southern bound one becomes the famous Geirangerfjord. The landscape along the fjord mixes between very steep shores and gentle valleys. There are plenty abandoned farms en route, many of which have already been renovated. The 679 metres deep fjord offers ample opportunities for boating, fishing and remarkable sightseeing.

The Sunnlyvsfjorden (Hellesylt) & (Geiranger)

With the town of Hellesylt lying at the end, and at 16 miles long, Sunnlyvsfjorden is one of the most innermost branches of the large Storfjorden. The famous Geirangerfjord branches off from this stunning fjord.

Flanked by towering mountain peaks, historic farms and tiny villages, the serene Sunnlyvsfjorden offers spectacular views as you glide through the still, crystal-clear waters towards the beautiful village of Hellesylt - one of Norway's most popular tourist destinations - and the UNESCO-listed Geirangerfjord - voted the world's joint-number natural world heritage site - which branches off into the western fjordland.

Alesund



Completely rebuilt after being destroyed by fire in 1904, Alesund looks quite different to other Norwegian towns along the country's west coast now better known as simply 'Fjordland'.

Stretching across three islands at the mouth of the magnificent Geirangerfjord, Alesunds architecture is now an eclectic mixture of mock-Gothic and neo-classical with more than a dash of Art Nouveau. Turrets and spires dot the skyline and you can trace the towns trend setting style

development at the Art Nouveau Centre, one of several fascinating museums in the town. The pick is the open-air Sunnmøre while the Atlantic Sea-Park is also worth a visit as one of the largest aquariums in northern Europe

The ship will dock very close to the town centre. The compact old city centre is surrounded by water and it is a major fisheries harbour. There is plenty to see with many tourist shops.

For those going on tours then there is about a 50mt walk from the bottom of the gangplank to the coaches.

Suggestions

Ålesund is built on a row of islands extending towards the Atlantic. The old city centre of was destroyed by fire in the first years of the 20th century. The compact old city centre is surrounded by water and it is a major fisheries harbour. There are buses and cars offering tours at port gate

Fjellstua viewpoint: An excellent trip. If you are thinking of doing this get off the ship early and follow the signs to the booking office and get tickets for the first train, 10am, later on there is normally a long queue. Cost in 2012 was 150Nk per adult. The trip takes an hour with a short trip around the town before making its way to the viewpoint. The views over the town and your ship are spectacular. There is a cafe and restrooms at the top.

Atlantic Sea Aquarium: There is an area where they can touch some of the aquatic animals. See the small rays that lift their heads out of the water and don't mind a stroke. Penguin feeding is hilarious - join in the fun and watch what the feeding keeper is wearing. The ships excursion is about £100 for 3 people and last 2 hours. However, DIY it is only £40 for 3 people, (2014). You can either get a bus straight to the Aquarium. Sorry cannot remember the number but the HoHo bus starts at the ship and calls at the aquarium.

Try the HoHo Bus: - Panoramic tour of city including photo stop at Aksla Viewpoint (10 mins if staying on bus, longer if hopping off) (approx. 90 mins for full circuit). Hop off at Sunnmøre Museum (2 hours more or less - up to you) Catch HoHo bus back to pier. Cost 200NK (£24) for bus, 80NK (£7 approx.) admission to museum. Total £31pp (\$48)

There is a museum that has a lift that takes you back in time! It is mostly about the fire which destroyed Alesund in 1904, when nearly all the houses were lost, but only one person lost their life.

Alta



This is the largest town in Northern Norway and offers northern lights, midnight sun, mountains, Sami culture, reindeer and UNESCO-protected rock carvings. It has pleasant winters and warm summers. During the winter nights, you can often see the northern lights dancing across the skies. The blue season in Alta lasts from November to January, after which the days get gradually longer. May to August has midnight sun and 24 hours of daylight.

Alta town is quite busy, There is a big mall with Free WiFi.

There is the cathedral, and sometimes there are ice sculptures in one of the squares.

Remember, the Northern Lights are a natural phenomenon, there are no guarantees that you will see them, so you could pay hundreds of pounds and they decided to take the night off, also, you have to be out and about to see them.

Suggestions

For a DIY trip here, Get the shuttle bus to the Tourist info office then take the westbound 140 bus to the Alta Museum stop, 50 NOK each way (£5) Walk down the road to the right of the museum past the large waste container, to the beach. At night the busses run every hour, seven mins past the hour, from the museum back to tourist information office. Check timings of course on the day or book a taxi. A lot cheaper than any excursion.

Get off the shuttle bus and look up the hill to Thon Hotel. Go through the mall next to it and out the back and turn right. Next to the Taverna over the road is where the ice sculpture festival area is normally held every year. You can try ice sculpting, admire the experts work. Sit on the reindeer skins on the benches near the fire and drink free coffee. Friendle people and a great way to spend time!

A recommended DIY is to walk out of the port area to the right and follow the road that runs around the bay. Take the residential road on the left, keep going until you can go no further. It is flat and easy, not a busy road. You could just book a cab if you didn't fancy the 40 minute walk each way. See Map.



I would only take this trip out on a clear night. The KP index the night we were there was only 2. So still a good display. If it looks like it is going to be cloudy might be worth doing a last minuite ship tour, as they can take you further afield and perhaps away from the cloud.

There is a tour to the Igloo Hotel. It is amazing how fast the coach drove on the icy and snowy roads. The Ice Hotel is beautiful with ice sculptures and cosy rooms with curtained doorways and ice beds covered with reindeer skins. You have a drink of vodka and blue Curacao in an ice glass. The hotel was surrounded by forest and skidoos are there for people to ride out into the trees. This was £69pp (2017)

Cruise Destinations

Northern Lights Tour: There are a number of destinations that you can visit, the one you actually do will be decided on the day by your guide, this is to try and give you the best opportunity to catch a glimpse of the lights. The cost is £135pp (2017) and you are not guaranteed to see anything, the Northern Lights are a natural phenomenon, there are no guarantees that you will see them and you have to be out and about to see them. Some cruisers have even seen the lights on board their ship whilst people on an excursion have not. So, you pay your money etc.....

Other excursions are: Reindeer visit and Sledging £150pp and the Husky Sledging is £185pp (all prices are from 2017 excursions).

Andalsnes



People have been cruising to Andalsnes for more than 120 years because of its stunning location. For, an Alpine town as well as a cruise port, Andalsnes nestles where the towering Romsdal Alps meet the northern end of the sparkling Romsdalfjord.

A small, friendly town with shops and markets, Andalsnes is also close to the famous Trollstigen road. This leads through pretty villages, past scenic fjords and majestic mountain peaks and across the stone bridge over the cascading

Stigfossen waterfall to the Trollvegen (Troll Wall) which - at nearly 6,000 feet - is the highest vertical drop in northern Europe.

It lies at the mouth of the river Rauma by the Romsdalsfjord, surrounded by mountains up to 1800m, with Trolltindene, Vengetindene and Romsdalshorn as the most prominent. Andalsnes has a lot of tourist traffic and the cruise port has about 40 calls a year. The Norwegian Mountain Festival is held every year in July, and Rauma Rock offers a lot of concerts in August.

The local tourist office will give out maps. But for those on a Northern Light cruise, it is shut in winter

Most cruise lines do a variety of trips from here so there may be something here that suits with a scenic tour with photo stops and limited walking.

Suggestions

The Troll Wall, provided the weather is good, you can look back down the valley to Andalsnes. At the top, there is a visitor centre/shop and walkway to the view point that sticks out over the edge to get the photos - there may be a couple of steps, but it is pretty much on the level. You can walk further down some steps to a lower viewing platform if you wish.

One way to see the Troll Wall and even more dramatic Alpine scenery besides is to take the Rauma Railway steam train which leaves from a station right by the cruise port.

Try booking a taxi to the top of the Troll Road, NK1100 in 2016, so 4 sharing is not too bad. There is also the Rauma Railway and the station is right next to where the ship docks. This is a fairly small port and not a lot to see in the town itself.

Excursions

Rauma Railway goes between Andalsnes and Dombås Oslo and Trondheim. The train is modern and comfortable with air conditioning, toilet facilities, a wheelchair elevator and a NSB MENY Automat (vending machine) service. Once on board the train, all you need to do is sit back, gaze through the large windows and enjoy your journey through a landscape of wild magnificence full of contrasts. This was £69pp (2017) and got mixed reviews. However, if here in winter unlike summer when the cruise lines run special trains, it is a public railway with booked seats.

Cruise Destinations

The train will run especially slowly through the most spectacular scenery. You will see views ranging from precipitous crags plunging vertically to the valley floor among majestic, jagged alpine peaks to lush, curving hillsides climbing towards great rounded mountain plateaus that extend into unspoiled national parks.

During the summer season an electronic guiding system will provide information about the sights along the route. Big panoramic windows will make sure that you can enjoy the splendid view.

With Saga there is a coach trip almost covering the same as above. A lot of the journey is the same as the train and you stop at a hotel for coffee and cake, not available on the train. The train do transfer from train to coach for the return journey.

Arendal



Arendal is a town and municipality in the county of Aust-Agder, Norway. Arendal - spelt differently from its fictional counterpart - is set on the picture-perfect Norwegian Riviera. It's just as charming, though, with 17th-century wooden houses, a neo-Gothic church and a restaurant and bar-packed harbour.

For a taste of the area's net-fresh seafood, head for Pollen. It's the town's bustling harbour area, where fishermen sell off their daily haul and waterside bars and restaurants add

them to their menus.

Suggestions

Venture over to the pint-sized district of Tyholmen. Some of the timber houses here date back to the 17th century. Don't miss the huge town hall - it holds the title of Norway's tallest wooden building.

Hop on a ferry to the car-free island of Merdø - about 20 minutes away. You'll be greeted by a sandy beach, as well as a small museum and café. And the views are just as rewarding - you can see over to Arendal's lighthouses.

Ferry timings:

The ferry runs several times a day during the summer season.

Ferry Arendal-Merdø 2016 (bracketed times valid from 4 July):

From Arendal: (10:00 - 10:30) 11:00 - 11:30 - 12:00 - 12:30 - 13:00 - 13:30 - 14:00 - 14:30 - 15:00 - 15:30 (16:00 - 16:30)

From Merdø: (10:30 - 11:00) 11:30 - 12:00 - 12:30 - 13:00 - 13:30 - 14:00 - 14:30 - 15:00 - 15:30 - 16:00 (16:30 - 17:00)

Bjellandstrand Gard; A must place to visit and enjoy the food, the garden and walk to the sea. Very special. The farm has been developed by the family and they have done a great job.

Bergen



Known as the 'Gateway to the Fjords', Bergen is Norway's second largest city. Yet with a population of less than a quarter of a million, it has the feel of a small town. It is beautifully sited against a backdrop of seven mountains and the funicular ride to the summit of Mount Fløyen affords wonderful panoramic views of Bergen and Norway's attractive coastline.

A former 'European City of Culture' with a string of fascinating art galleries facing its Lille Lungegardsvann

Lake, Bergen cruise port nestles amongst the magnificent mountains strung along Norway's western coastline and is a gateway to Fjordland.

If you are around in the morning or evening the Bergen has a stunning sailing in/out. Passing many small islands.

Where you dock depends which ship you are on. The smaller ships can dock in the centre, larger ones further away. If you are further away then there is normally a shuttle bus into the city which drops you right by the central park which is really pretty. If you are berthed close, then town is about 20 mins walk.

Bergen is easily walkable and has a lively fish market and an even better general market along the harbour front as well as many attractive bars and cafes. Bergen is also very good if you have accessibility issues, because it is fairly flat. You will find all the normal tourist shops and these display prices in NK, US\$, UK£ and Euro. However, if you are upset by animal skins, avoid the market and shops as they are for sale everywhere, including silver fox, wolf and seal pelts.

There's free WIFI in the vicinity of Mt Floyen and the Funicular and of course Macdonalds.

To start with Bergen is classified as the wettest place in Norway, so be sure to have an umbrella and raincoat packed. That saying on our two visits we have had sun.

Suggestions

This is a very easy DIY place. There are a number of hop-on-hop-off buses that tour the town, excellent for getting your bearings. These are about a 200mt walk after getting off the ship.

There is also a little yellow road train that takes you on a trip round the town and up the hill. It leaves from the corner of Bryggen and the fish market.

To enjoy the best views of this picturesque city, take the funicular railway to the top of Mount Fløyen, which overlooks both Bergen and the surrounding region. If you are thinking of doing this most popular attraction, then either do an organised trip, or book on line before going and you will jump pretty much to the front of the queue, or get there very early and queue. The queues to this attraction really build up as the day wears on. The ride is only about 5-6 minutes and there isn't that much movement on it but the views and beautiful panorama from the top are brilliant. For those with accessibility issues I am not sure if the funicular takes chairs so might be worth googling it. The cost is NK90pp return or NK45pp single, 2017, if you are thinking of walking back down. One thing to remember if the weather is bad with low lying cloud you may not see anything!

Another recommendation is doing the Ulriken cable car instead of the funicular, its simple to get tickets from the tourist information shop near the harbour fish market; it takes you to the top of the highest mountain where you can spend hours walking around at the top lots of fantastic views well worth the little extra. It is about £30 each including bus fare returns, the bus stop is just around the corner #2 bus, the woman in tourist information will give you maps etc.

Cruise Destinations

In the main area and at the end of the main pedestrianised shopping street there is a beautiful little park.

Overlooking the harbour the colourful Bryggen wharf is the face of Bergen. The characteristic wooden gabled buildings were once the home and offices of Hanseatic merchants. A visit to this area. Beautiful wooden buildings with some lovely little shops selling unusual crafts and traditional souvenirs (at a price!). There is even an all year Christmas Store where you can purchase a Father and Mother Christmas and lots more.

Walk up past the old houses to a Museum, and further on to a castle both worth a visit both have a nice coffee shop, not expensive and clean loos.

Try the Ice Bar The bar itself is quite small. Everything is ice there, even the glasses, and it has some really good ice sculptures. A bit pricy, entrance works out at about £16 but you get a warm cape and gloves to wear and a free drink. Kids are half price and they get a non-alcoholic drink. Like most of Norway additional drinks are expensive in comparison with the UK; cocktails (very small) are around £8 and shots are about the same. It is situated close to the Tourist Information office. <http://www.magicice.no/>

Sometimes a visit to Trolldhaugen is available the home of Edvard Grieg, as well as visiting Grieg's villa, the hut where he composed music and his gravesite. It also includes Troltsalen, a concert hall with seating for 200 visitors, where if you are lucky you can enjoy a concert of Grieg's music. You can even sit in the peace of Grieg's garden overlooking Lake Nordås, and perhaps understand where he got the inspiration for his music.

P&O do a trip to visit Old Bergen, a reconstructed town with approx. 50 wooden houses from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. With private homes from various periods, as well as a number of shops and workshops. The trip also included a visit to a reconstructed Stave church which is very beautiful.

Bodo



A destination for small ships.

The town lies just north of the Arctic Circle where the midnight sun is visible from 2 June to 10 July. The strongest tidal current in the world, with water speeds reaching 22 knots (41 km/h; 25 mph), is at Saltstraumen, situated about 19 miles southeast of Bodø. Kjerringøy is a well preserved old trading village on the coast about 25 miles north of Bodø. With its scenic setting and authentic buildings, several movies have been shot at this little port. It had a

picturesque setting with mountains in the background.

The modern cathedral is well worth a visit with a magnificent stained glass window above the altar. It has a modern shopping centre but really there is not much else to see.

Eidfjord



An extremely pretty village lying at the end of a tributary of the beautiful Hardangerfjord, Eidfjord is surrounded by mountains up to 1,900 metres high.

The small town is the gateway to Hardangervidda, which is the largest high mountain plateau in Europe and Norway's largest national park with fjords, mountain & waterfalls - all within a 30 minute drive with large open spaces and towering mountains.

A short walk from the village centre there are graves by the roadside dating back to the Iron Age and Viking eras. The 'old' church in Eidfjord was built in 1309. Nearby the stunning Vøringfossen waterfall is one of Norway's most popular natural attractions and features in optional excursions along with the amazing Sysen Dam.

With deep valleys and blue-green fjords, glaciers, mountain lakes, rivers and waterfalls. It is worth being up on deck for the beautiful sail in/out of the fjord.

Suggestions

There is a Troll Train that will take you around the village.

If you go to the tourist information office and get a map of the area that includes a 2k walk to a fabulous lake you can then continue on for a round trip of 6k to cover the whole area. There is a local hotel on the way back that has waffles with jam and cream, coffee and homemade cookies all for sum of £10 for two, very reasonable considering you are in Norway.

Try the Fjord excursion, into a small boat for a 2 hour trip up a small Fjord. There is amazing scenery and sometimes you see pod whales.

Flam



Surrounded by towering mountains the tiny village of Flåm, with some 500 inhabitants, nestles at the head of Aurlandsfjord, the innermost arm of the mighty Sognefjord. Its popularity as a tourist destination began in the late 19th century with the arrival of steamships carrying English and German passengers.

Sailing through Norway's beautiful Sognefjord, the world's longest and deepest fjord, is one of the most memorable cruise experiences. Overlooked by snow-capped peaks and

surrounded by cascading waterfalls, this is a sensational approach to the tiny village of Flam, which nestles in the innermost part of Sognefjord.

Today's visitors are drawn to Flåm for a chance to ride on one of the world's steepest and most spectacular railways. A masterpiece of engineering, Flåm Railway twists and turns through the steep-sided Flåm Valley amidst some of Norway's most breathtaking mountain scenery. It rises more than 2,845ft above sea level in just 12 miles and the views are just as dramatic as the journey.

There are a variety of other boat and road trips which promise more fantastic scenery along with visits to farms, mines, villages and isolated mountain lodges.

Cruise Destinations

Suggestions

This could be a tender port if there are a few ships in. There isn't a lot else in Flam besides the station and a few large outlet shops selling trolls, lace and knitwear.

A must do is the Flam railway from the station by the ship. The train stops half way up so that you could get out and see the 'troll'

If you are thinking of doing this either as a ships excursion or DIY the sooner you book it the better chance you have of actually going on the train. With cruise lines, the Flam train has been known to be fully booked a couple of hours after being posted as an excursion. So, book in advance as the trains have been known to be sold out on peak journeys which fit in with the ships sailing and leaving!

A couple of tips for you firstly try to sit with your back to the engine and as the train is standing on the platform the right side of the train. On the way up and down the train will stop at the waterfall, everyone gets out on the way up so it is a bit of a scrum to get your photos, however the driver will give you plenty of time. But on the way down he stops again and normally only a very few people got off to take a photo.

With P&O this was £70pp (2017). This trip can be booked DIY, cost about £35pp, but take care if there is a lot of cruise ships in port it can be booked up. Another suggestion if booking DIY, take out cancellation insurance, just in case. Web site for the Flam train... <https://www.visitflam.com/en/flamsbana/rutetider/>

In case you are wondering. There are no toilets on the train but there are some half way up when you stop and also at the top. The journey takes an hour each way.

Now for those with Accessibility issues. This is from the railway site: *"We've got two wheelchair spots on every train on the Flam Railway, and ramps for wheelchair access to the train in Flam and Myrdal. What's important is that you book a wheelchair spot/ticket when you book the tickets as to ensure that we've got room for the wheelchair (whether you book through the cruise or through us). The carriages on The Flam Railway are of quite old design, and as such there is no wheelchair access in most of the train, apart from the first carriage which has a larger door and attachable ramp, giving access to the two dedicated wheelchair spots.*

The wheelchair spots, and the carriage they are located in, have the same facilities as the rest of the train, including the on-board audio guide system as well as large windows.

As we generally experience high demand during the summer season on the Flam Railway, especially when cruise ships are at port in Flam, and all standard seats allocated for individual travellers are taken on a "first come first serve" basis at the time of boarding, we advise you to pre-book the wheelchair spot in order to ensure that there are no complications when boarding. Tickets are sold for a specific departure time, and I'm afraid the time's not flexible.

We don't have a disabled discount, but we allow carers to travel for free (but they have to book a ticket). To be able to get this free ticket you have to book directly through us (you can use this email)." Their email is: flamsbana@visitflam.com

If you don't want to do the railway trip walk along the road and down a small path following the river (the way the train passes) past some lovely little farm houses and a waterfall and onto a lovely church.

Try Norway in a Nutshell: Well worth the extra for so much more including a lovely lunch with drinks in a Hotel. There are two different excursions, one is train, train, coach and the other coach, train, train. You cannot pick you will be allocated one of them. You do the Flam railway,

Whatever way you do the excursion you will; do two train journeys, one of them the Flam railway, visit the town of Voss, where you have a fantastic lunch, hot and cold and visit the Tvinde Waterfall between Voss and Flam. The coach ride is scenic and some of the roads are rather steep and winding, but with beautiful views. This was £112pp - 2017

Cruise Destinations

There is a trip via Undredal Stave Church, Kjosfossen Falls then on to Myrdal where you have a tasty lunch, then you board the Flam Railway passing beautiful scenery stopping for a few minutes to see the maidens of the mist who appeared beside a waterfall and on down to Flam.

If you are fit and healthy and fancy a walk. What about a Hiking trip to Brekkefossen waterfall. Not an easy stroll and a good 3 hours there and back. You start from Flåmsbrygga Hotel or at Flåm station. For more information, including a map then link here: <http://flamsbrygga.no/en/activities/hiking-trip-to-brekkefossen/>

There is a RIB ride along the fjord. This is about a two hour trip. You can book it independently once you get ashore.

Geiranger



It is just nine miles long but the snaking Geirangerfjord is the most photographed of all Norways fjords because of the sheer beauty of its setting.

The whole point of Geiranger is the cruise down the fjord, it is spectacular

Firstly, get on top and to the bow at about 5:30am, wrap up warm and take your camera. You can get up there earlier but you will reach the main sights of the Seven Sisters and

Suitor at about 6:00am. It is worth the effort. Even if you have a balcony the place to be is 'On Top'.

All the way down the Fjord the views are amazing. Cascading waterfalls, snow (even in July), tranquil what more can you say. Ladies and Gents - linen trousers and flimsy tops or even shorts and t-shirts are not the clothing to wear at 6am when cruising up Geiranger Fjords even in July, it is bloody cold.

This is a tender port. Geiranger is a small village so a walk around will not take long. A must do is the customary photo with the troll; those who have been will know who I mean, and a look around the tourist shops.

Suggestions

There is a little tourist info place with maps with marked walking trails, ideal for a lovely walk.

You can walk up the hill to the Fjords centre (there is a charge), where there are all sorts of exhibits of life in the fjord, including a simulated avalanche. Very easy to find. When you get off the tender, there are shops in front of you, to the right a few more shops and a hill, a steep hill. Basically up the hill, past the wooden church, stop off here on the way up/down for some beautiful views of Geiranger, the fjord, and your ship, now past a waterfall on your right, hotel in front of you then round the bend and it's on the right the other side of the waterfall you walked past. Go over the bridge and you are there. The photos on the very large screen are amazing, lots to see here and good place for coffee and a snack and it was not a silly price either, plus clean loos!! If you decide to walk up the hill, although there isn't a lot of traffic, there is still traffic (cars and buses), and there is virtually no pavement most of the way.

If you have plenty of time and enjoy a good walk then another recommended walk with great views, walk up to the fjords centre, see above, from here there is a lovely walk up through woods and meadows to a cliff-top viewpoint immediately and vertically above the shops at the tender point. The view of the fjord (and the ship) is magnificent, and achieved without (too much) effort. It's about a 30-40 minute walk from the fjord centre - so all-in-all a nice 2-3 hour round trip. There's also a cafe en-route where you can go if nature calls. The viewpoint is known as Vesteras. You need some decent footwear as there is a bit that could be boggy at the bottom of the meadow. Copy this link: <http://www.geirangerfjorden.net/efottur.htm>

Cruise Destinations

The chocolate shop - and what a smashing place. Here's how to find it: Get off the tender and head for the gap in between the big shop wooden building which as you stand facing it will be on your left, and the tourist office - which is slight over to the right. There is a very very slight slope going up towards the road - turn right as if you are going up the hill. Virtually the first small road on the right as you start to walk up the hill is the way to go - it might have a signpost for camping. The chocolate shop is about the third little building/shack on your right, and will be between you and the water's edge.

If you love views and fresh air then the excursion to Mount Dalsnibba is worth doing. The trip up is a little daunting with the wind roads but when you reach the mountain it is well worth it for the brilliant views over the mountain tops. It seems strange to see and walk in snow in July and a nearby lake was frozen solid. On the way back down you will have a viewing stop where you can see all the ships in the fjord.

There is plenty of opportunity for you to DIY excursions here.

Gravdal, Lofoten Islands



Gravdal is one of the largest villages in Vestvågøy and part of the Lofoten Archipelago in northern Norway. Lying entirely above the Arctic Circle, the islands' dramatic natural architecture of rocky peaks along with picturesque villages places this archipelago in a league of its own. The village is so quiet that tourists can hear the ringing of the school's traditional bell.

Suggestions

Nusfjord; Lying in the heart of Lofoten, this charming open air museum is one of the most idyllic and best-preserved fishing villages in the islands.

Viking Museum at Borg; First settled by a Viking chieftain in 500 A.D., the area is now an open-air museum complete with a reconstructed house and boathouse.

Sund; A wonderland of rocky cliffs covered in bog plants, bright blue water, fresh air and panoramic views, the village of Sund also features a museum whose smithy creates stunning sculptures for purchase.

Svolvær; With sculptures made of crystal-clear ice, the Magic Ice Bar & Gallery expresses the bond between man and nature. Before you enter, you'll be dressed in a warm coat and offered refreshments.

Hammerfest



The world's northernmost town Hammerfest is a municipality in Finnmark county, Norway.

The town of Hammerfest is a compact and colourful micro-metropolis. The city square and streets are buzzing with life, whether the sea mist lies heavy over the city or Finnmark is panting in tropical heat.

When the cruise ships are in port, the atmosphere can be positively carnival-like, and when it is time to catch a bite, you can choose between everything from traditional Sami food served in a Sami turf hut at Mikkelgammen, to the world's most northerly Chinese restaurant.

Cruise Destinations

Suggestions

Hammerfest Tourist Information; Exceedingly helpful and friendly bunch, very enthusiastic about the area and the people and community, and a very well made little museum.

The Polar Bear Society; This free to enter attraction has many things to offer including information about the history of Hammerfest and how people live, thrive and survive above the Arctic circle. It also has the added bonus of **free wifi** and some of the most reasonably priced souvenirs.

Jernteppe; If you're looking for the place to go out for any kind of drinks in Hammerfest, this is the place to go. Absolutely fantastic selection of brews (9 on tap and about 130 by the bottle) worthy of any big city brewpub (and a great wine and liquor selection) - but also a generally fabulous place! Friendly and knowledgeable personnel.

Struve Geodetic Arc; The obelisk in Hammerfest in honour of the mind-blowing work done by people about 200 years ago, who measured a segment of the meridian of the Earth and did it literally with a ruler.

Haugesund



Haugesund, homeland of the Viking kings and birthplace of Norway, is a place where you can inhale the Viking spirit. Surrounded by beautiful coastline, spectacular waterfalls and majestic fjords it's no wonder the kings called this extraordinary setting home.

Populated for thousands of years, you travel back over 3,500 years. St Olav's Church, dating from 1250 AD, is a monument to the former days of glory, and next to the church stands one of Norway's tallest pillars, Virgin Mary's Sewing Needle.

In nearby Rehaugene you can explore the 'Pyramids of the North' - six intriguing Bronze Age, earthen burial mounds. And if you are feeling like a spot of retail therapy, you're in luck - not only is Haugesund filled with charming markets it's also home to Norway's longest pedestrian street.

Suggestions

The waterfall and the fjord; the great Langfoss waterfall drops 600 meters down to the fjord below.

Olav's Church is made of stone and was built in 1250. This is where the Royal Farm used to be. The area is surrounded by old grave mounds and tall memorial stones from B.C.

The Viking Farm is situated at Bukkøy, a short ten minute long stroll from Nordvegen History Centre. The farm is made of reconstructed buildings from the 9th Century. You may wander in traditional environments and experience an atmosphere that brings you immediately back to the Viking Age and the way the Vikings used to live.

Nordvegen History Centre is placed just next to the Olav's Church. Here you'll learn more about the sovereigns that controlled the coast of Norway from Avaldsnes. Some of them are known from kings' sagas and old songs.

Hellesylt



The old Viking port of Hellesylt, through which a roaring waterfall cascades, is altogether calmer, if far less breath-taking, than nearby Geiranger. The tourist office is in the Peer Gynt Gallery.

Hellesylt is about 8 miles from Greiranger and it is under constant threat from the Akerneset mountain, which is about to erode into Sunnylvsfjord. A collapse could cause a tsunami destroying downtown Hellesylt.

Suggestions

There is not much to do and see in this port. However, it is a beautiful village just to stroll through.

Take a small walk up to the road and back, stopping at the beautiful little church.

Peer Gynt Gallery; Each of the art pieces lights up, one by one, as the story of Peer Gynt is told and the music plays. Various languages are available including English.

Sunnylven Church; This is a small church set on the hillside in the upper areas of Hellesylt, reached either by walking up from the port, or down from the top of the waterfall in the centre of the town.

If hungry and thirsty then try the 'Café Ocal'.

Honningsvåg



Primarily a fishing community set amidst snow-capped peaks, with brightly painted wooden buildings, the summer months draw cruise ships aplenty. Just 1304 miles from the North Pole.

Honningsvåg is the gateway port for the almost North Cape and second most northerly point in Europe. It is surrounded by breath-taking fjords and waterfalls, and areas of dense forest, all bathed in the mysterious summertime light of the Midnight Sun. Silversmiths and potteries are numerous and

worth visiting.

Suggestions

Fjords and waterfalls, Duken Mountain, North Cape Visitor Centre, North Cape Museum. The Bird safari - is very good. If lucky you get to photograph White tailed Eagles.

The trip to the North Cape is worth it and also the 'round the island' tour is also stunning.

For anybody going to the North Cape the tourist shop in Honningsvåg accepts pounds and Euros.

Kirkenes



The small town of Kirkenes is located north east in Northern Norway, close to the Russian border. Kirkenes is known as the capital of the Barents Region and the gateway to the east.

One of the most famous attractions is the Kirkenes Snowhotel, a hotel built from scratch every year, which is open between December and April. Even though the temperature inside is a constant minus four degrees Celsius, the beds are warm and comfortable with reindeer hide.

Among the most popular summer activities are boat trips, hiking, diving, fishing, hunting, climbing - and bird watching.

Suggestions

Kirkenes Snow Hotel; Amazing if not challenging overnight stay. Good guides and helpful staff. If you are claustrophobic you may not like it. However, only open December to April.

The Borderland Museum; A small, but interesting small town museum with a particular focus on World War 2 and the Norwegian resistance.

Pasvik Nature Reserve; The trip from Kirkenes is worth the cost of a tour including this attraction. Be aware taking photographs eastward is forbidden.

Kristiansand



Your ship will berth almost in the centre of, a lovely, picturesque town in Southern Norway. A pretty little seaside town. And has its own microclimate, the Fjords can be cloudy but it will be very hot and sunny in the town itself. Because of this, it is a Norwegian holiday spot with lots of yachts in a very pretty Marina.

Suggestions

A pleasant little place which can be covered comfortably in half a day, but a nice change from the bigger cities. There is an interesting Maritime Museum to look around, very modern and well laid out.

There is a small tourist train from ship to town centre but easily walkable. Nice town centre where there is a cathedral, fort, park with fountains and shallow pools, and of course plenty of shops

The tour to the German museum is extremely moving. There are stories of the horrendous torture the prisoners suffered and you can almost feel what it might have been like. Very thought provoking.

There is an excursion on a steam train though the surrounding countryside which is very interesting.

It is worth knowing that should you arrive here on a Sunday either accept that the most exciting thing you will do is stroll through silent streets, book an excursion or stay on board.

Kristiansund



Kristiansund is a city and municipality on the western coast of Norway in the Nordmøre district of Møre.

On the North Sea coast, Kristiansund is built on four islands linked together by bridges and lies right at the ocean's edge out on the coast of Nordmøre, and the city has Norway's best and finest natural harbour right in the city centre.

Suggestions

Tourist Information Office for Kristiansund and Nordmøre; The maps in the tourist information office are superb for making the most of this area. The staff in the information office are very patient, helpful, proactive. Drop in a few minutes to get your information.

Klippfiskkjerringa; Statue of a fisherwoman on the waterfront reflects the role of women and hard work they did in drying and preparing the salt cod. It was the major industry that provided Kristiansund its prosperity and heritage.

Kvalvik Fort; Not far from Kristiansund, this fort located on the coast. It features some cannons, torpedo's and other World War II artefacts, and last but not least the structures and bunkers that are really worth exploring. It is also a nice area for a decent walk.

Varden; A trip to Varden offers a nice walk and a nice view of Kristiansund. It is also close to Bestemors hage - a cozy cafe just below of Varden.

The Atlantic Road with Kvernes Stave Church; If available, or if you can book a DIY this is a great trip for those all important views. It is a National Tourist Route with great viewpoints and picnic areas ensure visitors an unforgettable experience with the ocean close at hand.

Leknes - Lofoten Islands



The town's harbour is one of Norway's most important and visited harbours for cruise ships. In Leknes, the sun (midnight sun) is above the horizon from May 26 to July 17, and in winter the sun does not rise from December 9 to January 4.

The Lofoten Islands are absolutely Idyllic. Sheep wandering on the white beaches, the most incredible blue/green sea you will ever see.

Suggestions

The old school in the Fygle neighbourhood has been converted into a museum. Hol Church is located on the eastern edge of the town. Gravdal is located about 4 kilometres (2.5 mi) southwest.

The Glasblower at Vikten; The glassblower at Vikten is a great artist at his craft and watching first hand how the beautiful pieces available for purchase were made was an experience in itself.

Molde



Molde is a city and municipality in Romsdal in Møre og Romsdal county, Norway. Central ports for major cruise destinations Trollstigen, the Atlantic Road and Rauma Railway. The port of Molde is situated in the midst of the Norwegian fjords, and have been visited by cruise ships since 1882. Cruise ships dock in the town centre, great for independent exploration.

Suggestions

Molde Panorama; This is the spot to go to if you want to have a panorama view over the 222 mountains in Romsdalen. You can see the whole mountain range from there and count 222 peaks/tops! You can walk up, drive up and bicycle up. There is also a cafe on the top.

Molde Cathedral; This church is stunning & well worth a visit. However it should be accessible to the public more often. The church tower bell rings on the hour & sounds calming. The structure is gorgeous & well-kept.

Molde adventure centre; Excellent and reliable staff that speak English and German. They offer rental bikes and many more. Instead of riding a tour bus try an electric bike. Fun and easy to use even for non-bikers.

Narvik



Narvik or Áhkanjárga is the third-largest town and municipality in Nordland county, Norway

Narvik is an important industrial town in Norway because of its ice-free port. The need for access to an open harbour to export iron from Sweden led to the construction of the Ofotbanen Railway Line, and to the development of the modern town of Narvik. During World War II, the port of Narvik proved to be strategically valuable for both sides.

This dramatic part of the town's modern history is still

important to the region and its inhabitants.

The city of Narvik is surrounded by majestic mountains and its skies are especially clear and great for observing the northern lights in the late autumn, winter and early spring. From the end of May to the end of July you can experience the midnight sun.

Suggestions

Narvik War Museum; Highly recommended, even if you only have an hour. Details the famous naval battle that occurred in WWII in the fjord surrounding Narvik.

Narvikfjellet Gondola Lift; First of all know that to go up there you'll have to pay the NK180pp for the cable car. However, the views are amazing, and it's worth the money. If using the restaurant then a Coffee, hot chocolate or tea will set you back NK35.

Lights at the Lodge; If you are looking for a DIY for the Lights then this might be worth looking at.
<http://narvikfjellet.no/Home/?Article=35>

O

Iden



The peaceful village of Olden has the perfect Fjordland cruise setting - nestling at the southern end of one branch of the beautiful Nordfjord and at the entrance to the gorgeous Oldedalen Valley.

A lake in the valley has been turned a rich, deep green by the river pouring down the mountains from the vast, million-years-old Briksdal Glacier. Giant waterfalls also cascade down making the views even more spectacular as you travel through the valley to the foot of the glacier - one of the

offshoots of the vast Jostedal Glacier now designated as a national park.

A pleasant little village situated at the Southern end of the Nordfjord. Peaceful valleys and tidy farms lie in contrast to glaciers, waterfalls and towering mountains.

If this is on the itinerary that you are considering then you must get up to a good vantage point for the run up the Nordfjord, it's magical.

Olden is the gateway to the Jostedal Glacier, the largest glacier on the European mainland and the Briksdal Glacier.

Suggestions

Some tours head overland to the inner Nordfjord area with its wind-blown rocks, towering mountains and verdant valleys. Also in the area are folk and glacier museums, a skiing centre on the glacier plateau and northern Europe's deepest lake - Hornindalsvatnet.

The Tourist office is a few hundred yards from the port (get off turn right). They have maps of various walks. The 5 mile or so walk to the Floen is absolutely stunning. You can also book trips here.

There is a trolley train that takes a tour of the local sights which runs every 15 minutes. It starts from outside the ship. It takes you around the town and all around a large lake, you can get off in town to see church and have a coffee. It is recommended that you go early straight from breakfast as tickets sell out for rest of day by noon. The cost is about £20 pp, I know it seems a lot of money for a little train trip BUT Norway is expensive.

The Sky lift is new to Olden. It is not too far from the ship, about a 15 min drive. You can book in the ticket office right next to where you dock, the ticket includes the bus to the Sky lift. The Sky lift is about £35pp for a return or a combined ticket is about £60. The ticket is valid all day.

You can spend as long as you want at the top. If you use a walking stick and are a little unsteady on your feet, there are lots of flat concrete platforms to view from. There are some paths that are a bit uneven, but that's if you want to go off exploring, but you don't need to as all the views are in front of you. The restaurant is spectacular, very expensive if you want a meal but not too bad for coffee and cake. Now, some cruise lines charge for Children. If you book yourself, children up to 6 yr old go FREE.

Up to date information can be found here: <https://www.loenskylift.com/opening-hours-and-prices/>

A must do tour is a trip up to the million year old Briksdal Glacier, its most well-known glacier arm and a recommended trip, DIY or Excursion. A tour takes you to visitors centre from where you can either walk or take the troll car, up to the Glacier itself.

Cruise Destinations

If you want to DIY to Briksdal Glacier, there is a bus leaving Olden at 10:00 with a return at 1:30pm to take you back to Olden. If you are standing shore side facing away from the ship, you will see the visitor's info centre and charter bus parking in marked spaces on your right. The ride takes about 40 minutes; Cost is NK50pp each way, (2017). After you arrived at the glacier stop the driver will wait there until your departure at 1:30pm. If you want to use the Troll car the fee for the cars is NK200. You will get a blanket and rain protection if needed. Be warned, these get booked up so there is a good chance there will not be one available.

You could also hire a taxi. One recommended taxi company is Olden Taxis, Tel number : +47 95086146. It is a family run business and they will pick you up from the ship, take you to the Car Park and leave you to do your own thing. A pick up time will be arranged and they will get you back to the ship in plenty of time.

Tip, get either the first DIY trip or Excursion to here. We arrived at the glacier at about 9am and it was almost empty, there were some people around but the glacier area only had about 40 people there. By the time we left the area, 20 mins later, there was about 100+ with more arriving.

If you do the ships excursion then with Troll car £74pp or without Troll car £50pp these are 2017 prices with P&O. As a reward drinks and cakes are provided at the visitors centre as part of most Cruise line tours, failing that you can buy your own but it is expensive.

Once there, if you decide to walk from the coach park, this is not a stroll on flat ground, for a fairly fit person and at a brisk pace it is a good 45min to an hour to get to the glacier. Terrain is rough and very steep in places. Yes sometimes it is tarmac road but mostly cobbled track and some very steep steps and at some parts you are sharing a stony track with the troll cars and there's nothing between you and a steep drop.

The troll car is recommended for those who have mobility issues or not very fit. Remember, even if you take the Troll car you have about a 20 minute ride to the parking place and a 20 minute walk from there, again over tracks. Well worth it though.

For both options then trainers or walking shoes are essential for this one.

The Olden lake trip is good, a short tour round the countryside, a lovely sail on the lake with views of the glaciers & a stop on the way back at the old church where you could either stay in the village & walk back to the ship (15 mins) or go back on the coach.

For the thrill seekers you can take a Rib tour directly from the dockside it only lasts an hour but if you're an adrenaline junkie and this fits it is the thing to do.

Oldevatnet Lake Cruise; a leisurely cruise on the long and narrow lake. You stop off at a couple of view points on the way to the lake. The scenery as you sail across the lake is stunning. On reaching the other side you stop for coffee and waffles. The glacier is good and it is a short flat walk to the view point. Cruisers have said tat this is one of their favourite excursions. £60pp (2017)

Kjennalden Glacier & Lovatnet Lake. Some cruisers have said that this was THE trip of their cruise. Absolutely stunning and lots of hairpin bends. £69pp (2017)

Cruise Destinations

Rosendal



Rosendal is located on the Hardangerfjord, the second largest fjord in Norway. The sea, mountains and glaciers provide fantastic opportunities for activities in the great outdoors all year round in Rosendal.

Separated from the rest of Hardangerfjord by high mountains and the Folgefonna National Park, Rosendal sits picturesquely by the fjord with a close backdrop of high hills.

Suggestions

Baroniet Rosendal; The barony is one of its kind in Norway and offers a glimpse into the past when taking a guided tour through the castle. Follow up the guided tour with a stroll through the rose and other gardens and make sure to sample some food in the adjoining cafe.

Hattebergfossen; Waterfalls that are a short walk off the Baroniet property, refreshing stop on a warm day.

Steinparken; Very lovely walking trail. It is signposted off the road running to Baroniet Rosendal, this intriguing little open-air gallery has rock monoliths from the Folgefonna region, which have been sculpted and smoothed to stunning effect.

Skjolden



Skjolden is the innermost cruise port of Norway, located at the head of the longest navigable fjord in the world - Sognefjorden. The approach is via the picturesque Lusterfjord, close to Jostedalsglacier, the largest glacier on the European mainland and ends at the foot of the highest mountains in Norway - the Jotunheimen National Park. The fjord is surrounded by several of Norway's major attractions

The approach up the Fjord on a cruise ship is magical, the scenery amazing, it is the best part of any cruise to Norway.

Skjolden is a beautiful and calm place. It's main attraction being just that. At 130 miles from the sea it is remarkable to journey there by ship. Hopefully, it will manage to stay as clam and unspoilt.

From the cruise ship it is a 10 minute gentle stroll alongside the fjord to get to the village. Don't get too excited, there are a couple of coffee shops (one with free Wi-Fi!) a supermarket and lots and lots of fantastic scenery. It is not a large town, one store, a couple of restaurants, and the tourist centre.

Suggestions

The tourist information centre / café / gift shop is a short walk from the ship. In 2014 you could rent a kayak for NK250 for 3 hours.

If you walk up a small lane parallel to the river bridge from the cruise ship berth you arrive at a wonderful lake, with waterfalls, crystal clear water (very cold), and absolute peace and quiet. Spend some time there just relaxing and taking in the view.

Cruise Destinations

Sengjaberget Viewpoint; The most popular outing seems to be the 1 mile walk from the village up to a viewing area 395 feet up to this viewing point. A stunning view can be had from here across the village and out into the Fjord. It is not that well sign posted but just follow your fellow passengers as it is very popular.

Walking and bike rides; Bikes can be hired from the hotel, and along with walking, is a popular activity with Norwegian visitors. There is a road running around the side of the Fjords that makes for a great ride or walk.

Glaciers; You can travel from here to the Jostedalbreen Glacier (the largest one in Europe) which covers half of the Jotunheim National Park. This is probably the most popular trip for those looking to book a trip. There is a visitor centre and you can go on guided tours.

Stave Church; Some people like to visit this small church, which is about 20 miles away. It was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1980. Stave Churches date from 10th Century, and this one dates back to around 1130.

Stavanger



The gateway to Norway's spectacularly scenic fjord land, Stavanger is also a town with its own rich heritage as it is regarded as the 'Cradle of the Vikings'.

Your ship will dock right next to Gamle Stavanger, the old quarter, with its collection of 200-year-old white wooden houses (considered national heritage monuments in their own right), 12th century cathedral modelled on Winchester Cathedral, markets, craft stores and art galleries.

Look out, too, for the Three Swords monument in the Hafrsfjord rock recalling the Viking sea battle won by King Harald the Fairhair to create Norway as one kingdom back in the 9th century. This is on the way to a recreation of an Iron Age Farm at Jernaldergarden. The other major landmark is a short boat trip away through the delightful Stavanger archipelago to the 2,000ft high Pulpit Rock (Preikestolen).

The ship will berth in the centre with only a short walk into town, therefore easy to access for those who have accessibility issues. Stavanger town itself is very colourful and easy to get around. The old part of the town is lovely to stroll around with its whitewashed wooden houses.

There is free wifi in McDonald's.

Suggestions

In summer there is a market in the main square close to the ship and if you follow the road over the hill past the church there is a nice park and lake.

On the corner of Ovre Strandgate & Bergsmauet in the old town (opposite the canning museum) is a small café selling hot chocolate and the best cinnamon roll you will taste.

Just round the corner from this café is a reasonably priced small glass studio in Mellomstraen.

There is a very interesting [Gas and Oil Museum](#) with a life like dive to enjoy. Good place to go if the weather is not too good.

Cruise Destinations

Stroll up into the old part of the town. Amongst all the old wooden buildings you will find an authentic sardine cannery. A visit is recommended. The museum is set out as an authentic sardine (sprat) cannery could have looked in the period around the First World War. Then next to the museum is the Workers cottage, an authentic 1800s house built in regency style architecture. Throughout the summer season there is a cosy cafe in the first floor, with traditional Norwegian waffles, coffee, soft drinks and other things that can be enjoyed both inside the cottage or outside in the cosy backyard.

The HOHO bus is very good and it takes you to the famous 3 The Viking swords. The fare for the HOHO is 275 NOK adult or 140 NOK for children.

Excursions

The Lysefjord and Pulpit Rock excursion is superb and highly recommended. The excursion ship goes from right next to your cruise liner. There are ample seats inside but with limited views, and a few seats top side. However, if you are up for it spend the whole of the trip on top standing at the front of the boat. This will prove to be a good choice later on when the ones from inside decided to join you on top and you have front row viewing. The trip up Lysefjord to Pulpit rock is spectacular and so tranquil. At one point the only noise you can hear are the cascading waterfalls hitting the water. On the way back you stop for coffee/tea and waffles. If you are planning to do this trip, even in July/August, you do need warm wet weather clothing if you plan to stay on top for the whole journey and at least a warm fleece is recommended. £54pp in 2017

If you are looking at doing this as a DIY there are normally two locations. The company is called Norled. Sometimes they set up right next to the ship and sometimes on the far side near the restaurants. The cost is £40pp (2017) so cheaper than a ships excursion. The only difference is on the way back you do not stop for tea/coffee & waffles.

There is also a helicopter option for this excursion. £185pp in 2017

The Flora and Fauna tour. This is an excursion by boat to a private island which has an amazing sub-tropical garden. When you arrive you are split into groups and the owner and granddaughter show you round and after that you explore yourself. It is a beautiful place, a little bit of paradise and a must see (certainly in June/July/August) if you have the opportunity. This is an excursion that is worth every penny. If you are thinking about this then it is recommended to book early to see the incredible colour so far north. £68pp in 2017

Tromso



Tromsø is located 350 kilometres north of the Arctic Circle, and is the largest city in Northern Norway. The city is a popular destination for people wanting to catch a glimpse of the northern lights, with a season that lasts from September throughout March. However, chances of spotting the northern lights depend on the cloud cover and the amount of solar activity and are therefore difficult to predict.

From end of May to end of July the midnight sun shines, which makes it possible to participate in various activities around the clock.

A surprise to most visitors: Here you find art, history, sophistication, good food in a bustling, tiny city. All of it, though, is surrounded by spectacular scenery that is visible from everywhere in town.

Suggestions

Cable Car; Ride the cable car to the summit of Mt. Storsteinen for dramatic views of Tromsø city and Troms Island. Enjoy refreshments at the panoramic restaurant. You can get to the cable car up the mountain by walking (about 40mins) or a local bus; you also pass the arctic cathedral doing this!

Cruise Destinations

Arctic Cathedral; the cathedral's stunning ultra-modern architecture features eleven arched triangles of glass, steel and concrete with a beautiful stained glass window.

You can do the cable car and cathedral independently and very easy, shuttle bus to Tromso, 2 minute walk to bus stop for no 26 bus which takes you to cable car. After, 5 min walk to cathedral then bus stop opposite back to town. Bus is £5 return, cable car £17 per person.

Polaria Arctic Centre; This educational aquarium offers films, exhibits, a walk along the "Arctic walkway," a chance to meet bearded seals and a unique gift shop.

Polar Museum; set inside a restored early 19th century warehouse, the museum details the history of Norwegian explorers and hunters with presentations of Tromsø's past as a centre for Arctic hunting.

Under the Mack brewery there is a glass blowing studio. (opposite the Shell petrol station).

For a Diy company in Tromso TRY <http://www.villmarkssenter.no/> their Northern Lights tour is NK690, £66 (2017)

Trondheim



Enjoy the best of all possible worlds in Norway's first-ever capital, which is still its third largest city and one of its most popular Fjordland cruise ports, Trondheim. Looking south along the picturesque Trondheim fjord, the most northerly in Norway's west coast Fjordland region, are lush forests and valley but look north and you see the beginnings of the vast expanse of the Arctic Ocean.

But, whichever way you are heading, there is much to enjoy in Trondheim before you set sail. Visit Stiftsgården, the King of Norway's official residence, which also happens to be the oldest wooden building in northern Europe, while the Archbishops Palace is the oldest secular building in Scandinavia. Among the pick of several fascinating museums is one featuring the decorative arts with its collections of 16th century ceramics and Art Nouveau artefacts. For the best bars and restaurants, try the 18th century Bakklandet waterfront district.

This is quite a large town. The shuttle bus drops you off by the cathedral.

Trondheim Tourist Information Centre; The place for your Trondheim city maps from internet access or excellent tourist information. The office is centrally located in Søndre Gate and it was easy to find. The office is really nice and they have interactive tv screens.

Suggestions

Old Town Bridge; The Old Town Bridge is a Trondheim landmark that you can't help but find and visit as you walk around the city. From the bridge, the view of the old buildings along the waterfront is very scenic.

Kristiansten Fortress; Very beautiful place with GREAT views. A must see if you are in Trondheim.

Ringve Museum; (closed on a Monday) Even if you are not a music person, this place is amazing. Very well presented in a great setting with good views of the city. The displays themselves are extensive covering all aspects of music through the ages.

Ulvik



Ulvik is a municipality in Hordaland county, Norway. The municipality stretches from the Hardangerfjord to the mountains that reach 1,800 metres above sea level. It is situated in the very nook of Hardanger between steep, snowclad mountains and at the corner of the deep, glistening Hardangerfjord.

Nestled at the head of the peaceful Ulvikfjord and framed by a beautiful backdrop of glorious mountains, the pretty village of Ulvik is just a scattering of attractive houses, a

waterfront hotel and white-clapboarded church.

From where ship anchors in the fjord, the village is picture-postcard perfect.

Suggestions

Hardanger Bridge; The bridge has amazing views of the surrounding Fjords.

Ulvik Church; Dating from 1859 this white wooden church among gravestones is in a peaceful setting within town and close to fjord. The interior is a real surprise and painted in a variety of colours and styles. Very old pews, colourful nave, balcony seating and chandeliers - all an interesting combo. The old church bell on display has a lovely story to go with it.

Roykjafossen Waterfall; This waterfall takes your breath away! You can still see the old marks of how high this river and waterfall used to be.

Osa Mountain; Seriously beautiful trip up here. The ice caps and ridiculously blue lakes will leave you mesmerized. A scenic drive up here too, lots of gorgeous waterfalls.

Vesterålen



Vesterålen is a district and archipelago in Nordland county, Norway. It is located just north of the Lofoten district and archipelago and west of the city of Harstad.

Just north of the Lofoten Islands and the Arctic Circle, the archipelago of Vesterålen reaches out westwards from mainland Norway and into the Atlantic Ocean.

Ranging from tiny islets and rocks to some of the largest islands in Norway, this is a place defined by contrasts. The

landscapes span from calm and peaceful beaches and farmlands to rugged, alpine mountains, dramatic fjords and wilderness.

The whales are, quite literally, one of Vesterålen's biggest draws. Nowhere else along the Norwegian coast is the continental shelf as close to the mainland as in Vesterålen.

Suggestions

Andøya Space Centre - Spaceship Aurora; The Spaceship is located at the Andøya Rocket Range (ARR). From here sounding rockets are launched into space, and unmanned aircraft are dispatched to investigate and survey land and sea.

Inga Sami Siida; This is a Reindeer Farm and you get to hangout and feed them. You will also learn about the Sami Culture. A must do if you are in Sortland.

ICELAND

The midnight sun, with the sea like molten lava and the rest of the sky a beautiful pink and black, the glaciers that took ages to cruise past, it is a time of many firsts, which you may not repeat but will never forget.

Iceland is very geared up for the tourists and know what they want. If you book through their tour operators they turn up on time and are very efficient.

Akureyri



The largest town outside Reykjavik, is situated on the inner section of Eyjafjörður fjord. It is an old trading station and also an important fishing town and still gets heated with geothermal water from Laugaland in Eyjafjörður. It is a pleasant little town and a gentle stroll from the ship.

Get up on top for the sail in and out it is AMAZING. Try and get somewhere with all around views it is breath-taking. Here is where Freedom dining is best; the sail out just before the entrance of the fjord there are so many whales

you do not quite know where to look. Ps, make sure you have your camera handy.

This is a tender port and you dropped close to the town with a flat but approx 15 mins walk.

Suggestions

It depends really on your interests and how adventurous you are. There is a 4 x 4 adventure, straight through rivers up and down mountains no roads just point and aim. Great fun.

Try a walk up the lava fields. However, very uneven and quite a hard walk not recommended for anyone with mobility problems.

There is a day trip to the Laufas, old farm houses, which included a visit to an old village with grass roofs, then on to Godafoss falls, followed by a tour of the town with its pretty wooden houses.

The 'Jewels of the North' trip to see the Earth's crust close up. There is also a chance to do some whale watching here.

Whale, dolphin and bird watching are also popular there are some wonderful bird cliffs, and yes there is also a natural spring bathes, and if you are up to it what about an Arctic Flight? The fjord is rich in fish stocks in the summer which is why so many whales come here to feed.

If you fancy a whale watching trip then do not bother booking through P&O unless you want to be guaranteed a place. You gather outside on the coach park next to the ship which is only a 5-10 minutes walk to the whale watching boat. The company P&O use is Elding. Just walk there yourself and get a ticket on the same boat as the P&O excursion. You save yourself money and are sure that the cruise ship won't leave without you.

Of course you could stay around town which wouldn't disappoint though the prices will make your eyes water. But, on the hill above the old town is Lystigarðurinn a park and botanical garden with specimens of almost all native Icelandic plants as well as hundreds of foreign ones. Just north of the town is a skiing resort on Mount Hlidarfjall, which is among the best in the country.

Eskifjörður



Eskifjörður, or also Eskifjörður, is a town and port in eastern Iceland with a large fishing industry.

Eskifjörður is a charming seaside village in the middle of the eastern Fjords. Eskifjörður became an official trading post in 1789 and has been a commercial centre ever since. Two mountains, Eskja and Hólmatindur, dominate the fjord. Hólmatindur - 985 meters above sea level - is the pride and joy of the locals.

Suggestions

Maritime Museum; The museum mostly exhibits objects and utensils relating to fishing and seafaring in general. It also displays various reminders of local trade, industry and medicine from times past.

Rare Stone Collection; The Stone Collection is told to be one of the best ones in Iceland, and is privately owned by Sören Sörenssen and his wife Sigurborg Einarsdóttir.

Grundarfjörður



Sailing into Grundarfjörður, one travels into Iceland's heroic past, for this township - village really - is one of the oldest settlements on the island. The imposing landscape with its austere mountains, volcanoes and lava fields provided the dramatic setting for one of Iceland's cultural treasures, the sagas. Composed in the 10 and 11th centuries, the Icelandic sagas represent one of the oldest literary traditions in Western Europe. They are tales of migration and settlement, war and blood feud, Christianity versus the old dark gods of Norse mythology. In Grundarfjörður, the world of the saga is

still present. One can tread the "Berserkers' Path" or climb the hillock called Helgafell, the "Holy Hill" mentioned in the Laxdæla saga where Vikings once worshipped Thor.

Much of the Snæfellsnes Peninsula is a national park. The park's centerpiece is the mighty Snæfellsjökull, an imposing stratovolcano with flanks buried beneath a glacial flow. The mountain is a frequent setting in Icelandic myth. The peninsula is also a birdwatcher's paradise.

Suggestions

Kirkjufell Mountain; Stunning view of this wonderful attraction right from the side of the road. Just beautiful scenery. There is a lovely spot near the waterfall that overlooks it.

Gatklettur; Gatklettur Rock is located between the villages of Hellnar and Arnarstapi, not far from Arnarstapi Harbour, on the southern side of the Snæfellsnes Peninsula (Snæfellsnes), close to the tip of peninsula, in West Iceland.

Heimaey



Heimaey, literally Home Island, is an Icelandic island. People from all over the world come to Heimaey, to marvel at its beauty, taste the culture, and explore this very extraordinary volcanic landscape.

Until mid-January 1973, Heimaey was considered volcanically inactive both by volcanologists and its residents. On the fateful night, the island's 5,300 residents were alerted to the eruption by the honking of fire engine horns. When they stepped outside their houses, they saw bright red lava exploding from Eldfell and a wall of fire spurting from a fissure snaking across the island. The vast majority of the islanders were evacuated that night, not returning until months later. Many of those living on the eastern side came back to find their houses engulfed by lava, while other properties had been completely flattened or buried under mountains of ash.

Suggestions

Eldheimar; A good stop off and nice to have the headphones for telling the story of the eruption as you walk around.

Saeheimar Aquarium; Aquarium was wonderful! Small and very personable. Great display of animals but the best part is Toti the Puffin.

Sagnheimar Folk Museum; It's a very friendly and nice little museum that tells the story of life on Heimaey the only inhabited island in Vestmannaeyjar, Iceland.

Husavik



Húsavík is a town in Norðurþing municipality on the north coast of Iceland.

Húsavík, Iceland's whale-watching capital, has become a firm favourite on travellers' itineraries - and with its colourful houses, unique museums and stunning snowcapped peaks across the bay, it's easily the northeast's prettiest fishing town

Suggestions

The Transportation Museum at Ystafell; For any car lover this museum is a must go. Amazing to see all the different cars used in Iceland plus many other rare cars.

The Husavik Whale Museum; When going to Husavik you should definitely not miss this. Lots of whale skeletons in full size, stories of whale hunters, educational stuff and a good souvenir shop.

The Exploration Museum; A great hidden gem of a museum. Though currently modest in size (and there are expansion plans), the museum had many interesting photos, artefacts and displays about explorers past and near-present, from the Vikings to astronauts.

Whale Watching; there are plenty of opportunities to go out and see these majestic creatures.

Ísafjörður (Ice Fjord)



This is a very remote North West corner of Iceland and is a tender port. It is a very small town with friendly locals who set up stalls in the square selling homemade pancakes, handicrafts etc. It is a working fishing community with many traditional houses and is a typical Icelandic community surrounded by picturesque wooded hills.

Normally used it as a restful stop between Reykjavik and Akyuri. Very small town with very friendly locals who set up stalls in the square selling homemade pancakes, handicrafts

etc.

Suggestions

The trip to Vigur Island is OK. It involves a tender trip in and a half hour boat trip out to the island. Vigur is a privately owned and family run island with the emphasis on wildlife preservation, particularly birds. They have nesting puffins, arctic terns, eider ducks and guillemots to name a few and there is a guided walk right around the island to get up close and personal with the birds. The arctic terns are real thugs and will attack anything that they perceive as a threat. To combat this you are all issued with 4 foot long poles with a little blue flag on top to hold above your heads as the terns will automatically go for the highest point.

There is a tour to the abandoned village. It is a boat trip up the fjord to an even more remote area, where people used to live but moved out in the 1950's.

www.igtours.is highly recommended for pre-booking tours, you pay when you get there. They are very good.
www.igtours.is

If you like walking you can information for a walking tour from the tourist office near where the tenders land.

Reykjavik



The City is quite compact so it's easy enough to just wander around on foot, once you have been dropped off by the shuttle. You also need to be aware that Reykjavik and its environment is a very "pricy".

Once you get off there are Taxis, Hoho buses and coaches approx 25 yds from ship

There is one main street in Reykjavik this is called Laugavegur, this is technically in walking distance but I think

most ships provide a bus to the central area. There are plenty of boutique shops selling all sort of Icelandic wears along with bespoke jewellery shops selling the famous Lava stone

One of the most fascinating places, geysers, hot springs, whale watching, bird watching, fish drying in the sun, climb that mountain and a glacier walk. If you feel up to it or just walk around Reykjavik, which you can do using a map from one of the many info centres.

It is not the cheapest place in the world. An average cost for a lunch is around £30- 40 for 2 people. Do not even think about drinking, Beers is about £7 a pint and wine about £8-9 a glass. (2015)

You can eat a little cheaper if you don't mind a hot dog stand or the lobster hut (lobster tails subs!) £2 - £6 per head. (2015)

Cruise Destinations

The main street leads down to the Old Harbour, if you want the best Lobster soup in the world go to 'SeaBaron' a quaint little cafe designed by fishermen, where you sit on barrels and dine on surfboards!

Suggestions

Tips: DO take waterproof clothing with you, the rain can come in very quickly, and if visiting the waterfall and blow hole will get you wet. Wear sensible shoes everywhere the walking can be rough.

Depending on where you moor there is one of those hop on/hop off city tours which comes right to the cruise terminal.

In the city itself, head for the Lutheran Church with its stunning architecture. For 1,400 ISK about £7.23 (2014) for a couple, take the trip up in the lift to the bell tower. Well worth a visit with great views over the town from windows all around. Try and get here early, it does get busy.

The Pearl, just above the town is worth a trip. It is a 360 degree viewing platform and revolving restaurant atop 6 large geothermal water storage tanks with fantastic views all around.

Round the Harbour is the Maritime Museum, worth a look round explaining the traditions of sea fishing through the ages in Reykjavik, also near here is the Viking Saga Museum, consisting of Life like models made out of wax!

For a nice DIY, from the Reykjavik tourists info web site download a walking tour of the city it is easy to do on foot.

Tour Operators

For DIY trips then www.igtours.is are the people for your tours.. A fraction of ships cost, you can book before you go and pay them on the tour. One person who spent some time here booked the Golden Circle, shuttle to Blue Lagoon and Northern Lights all for £125. Knowledgeable and reliable people highly recommended.

If thinking about a whale watch trip, the Elding Whale Watching Office is about a ten minute walk from where the shuttle bus drops you off. A 3 hour trip for two costs 17,000 ISK, about £87.78, (2014). Now, do not expect to see anything it is all by chance. If you are unlucky then think about your £88 against the PO excursion of £150 (2014)

Excursions

The Golden Circle looks expensive - but in terms of the amazing sights, it is great. This tour can be arranged prior to going. Recommendations are IG Tours and GeoIceland. They will both collect you from the port, if there are not enough people from your ship to fill the bus you would share with another ship. This will be much cheaper (Iceland is very expensive) than the cruise tour and you will see much more.

The Blue Lagoon in Iceland is worth doing; look up Blau Lagonda or Blue Lagoon. It is the spill water from the geothermal plant. You immerse yourself and use a handful for exfoliation.

The 4 x 4 trip is good, race along a beach, through rivers and up a mountain really enjoyable.

Seydisfjordur



Considered the cultural capital of Eastern Iceland, Seydisfjordur lies at the head of a narrow fjord flanked by high mountains. This town of some 700 souls achieved municipal status in 1895, the first town in the East of Iceland to do so. The city is also the terminus for the ferry service linking Iceland to the Faeroe Islands and Denmark. Seydisfjordur is your gateway to the wild and isolated scenery of the Eastern Fjords. In myth, these narrow bays and towering mountains were once the home of trolls, elves and ogres.

Seydisfjordur boasts a wealth of well-preserved 19th century homes and buildings. In the summer the small town can take on a cosmopolitan air as visitors flock to town aboard the ferry.

Suggestions

Seydisfjordur Church; Anticipate a lot of visitors after your cruise ship docked, the little village church has a young English-speaking girl stationed inside the entrance to provide information to anyone interested. The church was sky blue on the outside with a tower and steeple doubling its height. The inside had rich wood paneling, and an arched altar area with two long, narrow windows behind the altar, allowing natural light to brighten the altar. In the rear was an arched choir loft with an attractive organ with brown and silvery pipes.

Gufufoss; Not as grand as some of Iceland's better known waterfalls, this is still a good stop on the winding road down into town.

Skaftfell - Centre for Visual Art; One of the best visual arts galleries in Iceland on top. At the bottom is a very cozy café/restaurant. Highly recommended.

Technical Museum; The best way to enjoy the museum is to have a guided tour. It not only collects items it also collects workmanships and shows it in the museums festival in July. The museum is big, 6 buildings belongs to the museums, a boat and a shipyard. All those buildings played a big role in the town's history and some in the whole country as well.

GREENLAND

The approaches to your ports of call in Greenland are incredible. However, there is absolutely nothing here except for the scenery. Greenland is described as a country without roads, and it is true that it does not have any roads in the traditional sense between cities or along the coastline. The only way to get from one town/village to the next is plane, boat or sledge.

Kangerlussuaq



Kangerlussuaq is a small town in western Greenland. It is at the eastern end of a deep fjord. It has the easiest access to the inland ice of Greenland. You can easily get to the inland ice by car, bike, Icelandic horse or by foot. The distance from Kangerlussuaq to the inland ice is only 25 km.

It also has fascinating wildlife with chances of seeing musk ox, reindeers, arctic foxes, falcons, eagles, ravens and some of the most power full northern lights during the winter.

Suggestions

If you want to experience the ice then try a Day Tour. Travel to the Russel Glacier. There you can walk on the glacier and drink water from the thaw. Good waterproof shoes are suggested along with suitable clothing.

Cruise Destinations

Staying closer to town, then the Kangerlussuaq Museum. If you want to know and learn more about Kangerlussuaq and its history. If the weather is bad-you can spend a whole day there studying the collection of this museum.

Nanortalik



Nanortalik, formerly Nennortalik, is a town in Nanortalik Island, Kujalleq municipality, southern Greenland.

Nanortalik is a truly unique cruise ship destination and the people and authorities always offer a warm welcome and an exciting schedule to visiting cruise ship passengers.

Nanortalik means "the place with polar bears", as polar bears live and hunt on the sea ice outside of town.

Try and get up on top for the sail in, you will be surrounded by icebergs. So, camera ready.

The tourist information people will set up near the dock with maps etc.

Suggestions

Open Air Museum; A lot of Information about the former local life. History and traditions are presented. Clothes and hunting gear.

The people of Nanortalik have done a wonderful job of making their tiny town worth a visit from the ever increasing cruise ship traffic and the open-air museum is a perfect example. A local gentleman standing on the road in sells tickets, and visitors are free, then, to wander through the buildings around the old harbour and see what life in this isolated part of the world used to be like.

Cape Farewell; You cannot see cape Farewell from Nanortalik, but most cruise ships will pass close by, before or after visiting Nanortalik.

Narsarsuaq



Narsarsuaq is a settlement in the Kujalleq municipality in southern Greenland.

Narsarsuaq means 'the great plain' it is a village with 140 residents so do not expect city life.

Suggestions

Qassiarsuk Viking Ruins; Transfer by zodiac boat from Narsarsuaq to Qassiarsuk through Tunulliarfik Fjord. Walk through the village of about 50 inhabitants, mostly farmers, and guided tour of the Viking ruins of Brattahlid (present day Qassiarsuk), learning the history of the arrival of Eric the Red from Iceland. This was 400 dkk or €55 (2016)

Narsarsuaq Museum; about a 30 min. walk on a paved road from the pier. The museum has incredible memorabilia from the American Air Force Base, Blue West One 1941 - 1958. The Blue Ice Cafe has good coffee & internet.

Cruise Destinations

Nuuk



Nuuk, Greenland's capital, is a small city on the country's southwest coast. Its large fjord system has waterfalls, humpback whales and icebergs. Its waterfront is dotted with brightly coloured houses against the backdrop of Sermitsiaq mountain.

The approach to Nuuk can produce whales spouting and doing tail flips, whilst the scenery is all jagged mountains.

To be honest, some people have said there is not a lot to see in Nuuk. The Cathedral, the University and the Parliament buildings are about the only noteworthy structures.

Suggestions

National Greenland Museum and Archives; Very nice museum - interesting exhibits with explanations in English, and with very friendly and helpful staff. The mummies are interesting, but also the rest of the exhibits are definitely worth looking at.

Katuq Cultural Centre; Very impressive culture centre with lots of events, permanent and temporary arts exhibitions, cinema and nice café.

Nuuk Art Museum; A small, yet surprisingly big art museum showing a wide variety of artists and styles. A maybe see when you're in Nuuk, especially considering the low price of admission.

Nuuk Cathedral; It's a beautiful cathedral, just like on a picture post card. Being close to the harbour makes the setting even better. The statue of Hans Egde the founder of Greenland is behind the Cathedral in top of a rock.

Qaqortoq



Qaqortoq rises quite steeply over the fjord system around the city, and on hot summer days you may be tricked into thinking that there is a sub-arctic Riviera, a special Greenlandic version with icebergs in the bay and frolicking whales in the fjord, instead of sandy beaches, palm trees and over-population.

Qaqortoq is best seen on foot, which does say something about the size of **the** town considering Qaqortoq is the largest in Southern Greenland.

This is a tender port.

The town and suburbs are very colourful with the houses brightly painted blue, red, green, orange and yellow. They stretch up and down the hillsides are very picturesque.

The sail-away from Qaqortoq down a fjord is memorable with the sun shining on the snow topped mountains and if you are lucky icebergs all the way.

Most people end up in Qaqortoq as part of a half-day or full day stop on a cruise ship.

Cruise Destinations

Suggestions

You may not believe it at first sight but there is enough to do here for a half-day stop or even most of a full day.

The main attraction is the 31 sculpture "Stone and Man" project started by local sculptor Aka Hoegh who encouraged other Scandinavian sculptors to come to Qaqortoq to carve their ideas in the outdoors all over the Qaqortoq environs. They are unique, interesting and fun to find since they are scattered all over the area. It can take 1-2 hours to find all of them. A map showing their location can be obtained for 10 KR at the gift shop.

Speaking of the gift shop there is only one (repeat "one") gift shop in the entire town. It is located right at the tendering dock and opens promptly on the arrival of the first tender. It is extremely small and becomes overly congested as soon as the first tender arrives. If you want to have the best selection of local souvenirs you need to be there as early as possible. Otherwise you will deal with claustrophobia, long lines and limited merchandise. It carries the standard gifts (t-shirts, sweatshirts, postcards, etc.) but the best items are the tupilaks (grotesque sculptures carved by locals from bone) which are available from \$75US and up.

Dining, there only 2 options--the small cafe in the centre of "town" and the hotel restaurant which has a balcony for dining on a good weather day. The harbour view from the balcony is great.

There is a small museum worth seeing which has a collection of tupilaks. The upstairs part of the museum is where Charles Lindburgh spent several nights.

Also, don't miss the local church with interesting interior artwork.

Sisimiut



Sisimiut, formerly known by its colonial name Holsteinsborg, is the capital and largest city of the Qeqqata municipality, and the second-largest city in Greenland.

Suggestions

Take the time to walk around this lovely old town. Better yet, go on a hike to see a couple of exposed and ancient graves and the crashing waves in the background. Beware if it's windy, you can get winds of up to 40 knots and it will make it difficult to keep your footing.

Hiking poles are a must. Visit the Sisimiut Museum, the arts/craft shop and the little church.

Tasiilaq



Tasiilaq, formerly Ammassalik and Angmagssalik, is a town in the Sermersooq municipality in southeastern Greenland.

Tasiilaq means "the place with a lake" (because of the shape of the fjord).

If, for a moment, you are able to tear your gaze away from the mountain tops, the icebergs and all the great opportunities for adventure, you will discover that you are standing in Tasiilaq and looking out over King Oscar's Harbour

in East Greenland.

Suggestions

Ammassalik Museum; This little museum is housed in Tasiilaq's first church and it has a wonderful collection of Inuit crafts, clothing and equipment. It also has a very good photographic exhibition on early Greenland explorers and expeditions.

Prins Christiansund - Cruising

The Prince Christian Sound is a waterway in Southern Greenland. It separates the mainland from Sammisog and other islands of the Cape Farewell Archipelago near the southernmost tip of Greenland.

One of the most majestic, rugged, remote and unspoiled areas on earth, Prins Christian Sund, Greenland. Visiting this area on a ship makes it possible to see the soaring mountains, glistening glaciers, imposing icebergs and tumbling waterfalls and natural beauty up close.

Torssukátak - Cruising

Located in the north-eastern part of Uummanaq Fjord, it separates the Ukkusissat Peninsula in the northeast from Appat Island in the southwest. The strait waterway is an extension of Itillarsuup Kangerlua fjord. Its north-western mouth opens into the Uummanaq Fjord 4 km southwest of the Ukkusissat settlement.

This is a awe-inspiring waterway that will create memories which will last forever.

SPITSBERGEN

Longyearbyen



Longyearbyen is the largest settlement and the administrative centre of Svalbard, Norway. It is one of the northernmost settlements in the world.

The climate in Spitsbergen is mild compared to the location as it benefits from the Golf Stream. At the same time it is a dry place, with the limited amount of rainfall. With incredible flora and fauna and rich in wildlife, Reindeer, Svalbard Grouse, Polar Fox, and the king of the arctic, the Polar Bear. -

Do NOT walk outside the settlement, there are more polar bears than people and people do get killed because they do not heed the warnings.

Suggestions

Svalbard Museum; Interesting and modern museum, not very long to see it all though - small boutique with jewels and books especially - you need to leave shoes and bags at the door, in free locked lockers.

North Pole Expedition Museum; This museum was largely built by the two people who run it. For a small museum, it has wonderful exhibits and many people stay for 1 1/2 - 2 hours going through the exhibits.

Cruise Destinations

Ny Alesund



Ny-Ålesund is a research town in Oscar II Land on the island of Spitsbergen in Svalbard, Norway.

Very pleasant but not much to do except walk around and take photos. It is known as having the most Northerly Post Office? And it has one loo.

Notes on a Northern Lights Cruise



The thing to remember is that the Northern Lights are a natural phenomenon, there are no guarantees that you will see them and you have to be out and about to see them. It has been known of a couple who went to reception to complain to P&O as they didn't see the Lights!

Clothing

Remember where you are going. So, you will need warm clothes. No cotton, denim etc. best combination is a very lightweight merino wool or technical base layer, a heavier base layer, on top a good quality fleece and/or down gilet and a padded coat with hood. In between as many more thinnish layers as you need. Thermal pop socks and snow boots Two pairs thermal leggings (grade 4, M&S), pair of cotton jogging bottoms, water and wind-proof over trousers. Long-sleeved thermal vest (Grade 4 M&S), sleeveless thermal vest, thin cotton knitted polo neck, Polartec fleece and water and windproof Sympatex jacket Silk liner gloves (essential as thin enough to work cameras) and either thermal knitted gloves or waterproof ski mitts. Thin and thick gloves, at least two pairs of socks, a balaclava. The little instant hand and foot warmer packs are useful. Sturdy boots essential and ice grips very useful.

Don't forget lots of gloopy cold cream and sun screen for the few bits of face that are exposed.

The Lights

Taking that all important shot: Most cruise line put on lectures about taking that important shot.

Point and shoot cameras are very unlikely to work. Try and use a DSLR or a good Bridge camera that you can set to manual. You really need to be able to do this, or have another way of doing long exposures of not less than 15 seconds and often up to 10 minutes. For this reason video cameras will NOT work either! If you are using a phone/device there is an app for this type of shot, but whether it is any good, I do not know.

These are suggested settings for your DSLR:

check the minimum operating temp for your camera, you could be in temperatures of -30C

Use a tripod

Use as wide an angle lens as possible.

Switch to manual setting

Take off all filters including UV and Skylight - they reduce the light hitting the lens

Switch off vibration/shake reduction if available

Use an ISO of 400 or even 500 + (according to the local experts)

Set camera to as large an aperture as available

Set to bulb and experiment but you need exposures of at least 15 secs up to around to 10 mins

Set to daylight setting NOT fluorescent or artificial light or the colours won't be true

Use lens hood to keep frost/snow/ice off lens

Pre-focus to infinity or on a tree etc

Take spare batteries and keep in thermal sock close to body

Do not use the flash on the camera; it can ruin other people's photographs.

If possible use a remote control to take the shot, that way you will have less camera shake.

Make sure you know how to put your camera onto the tripod in the dark.

To save dazzling other people with your torch light when out at night, get some red cellophane paper before you go and fix a disc of it inside the glass of the torch. You can still see to change camera settings.

Invest in some Hot Hands hand warmers. These can be tucked in your mittens, clothing etc and stay really warm for over 12 hours, absolutely brilliant and a snip at £4 for 10 pairs in Tesco's.

Be mindful of condensation on your camera once you bring it back in to a warm moist location. Stick it into a sealable plastic bag while still outside before bringing it in. The outside air will be dryer and you will get less actual condensation on the camera surface.

And lastly - DON'T PANIC if/when the digital screen stops working! The screen will come back on when it warmed up. Also - acclimatise the equipment.

And finally - enjoy the Lights - don't watch all of them through a camera lens

BALTIC

DENMARK

Aalborg



Aalborg is a city in the Jutland region of Denmark. It's known for its revitalized waterfront on the Limfjord, the body of water that cuts through Jutland. It is a multi-faceted city full of contrasts. A city with a lust for life and all of its pleasures. It's also grand on a manageable scale with all the major city attractions within easy distance.

Suggestions

Lindholm Høje Museum; Very detail-oriented and historical correct museum and outside area with original viking remains.

The Park of Music; The location is easy to get to just the other side of the main train station. It is well located on a walk back from the viewing tower over the city. The park features 99 trees (currently) with a different artist associated to each tree, with the ability to play a medley of their greatest hits.

Aalborghus Castle; You can just wander round the grounds, it is free. It is set by the harbour which is pleasant and the boat trip from near here along the harbour is good and very interesting.

Bornholm



Bornholm is a slow-paced Baltic island, west of the Etholmene Islands. Lying off the coasts of Sweden and Poland,

This Danish island is another 'holiday' island and is quite rural.

It is possible to walk from the port but this is not to everyone's taste unless you like working docks! So, take the shuttle into the town. The shuttle normally has a big box with maps, make sure you get one.

Make sure you visit the tourist information centre, this is a little way out of town and close to the ferry port (not the cruise terminal). The shuttle should stop here on route to town.

Suggestions

There is a wonderful and very cheap bus trip around the island from the tourist office.

Visit the island's main historic sight, the ruined-yet-still-epic stone fortress of Hammershus castle on the rocky northern tip of the island. After sightseeing The Castle, walk Down to Hammershavn kiosk to have Quick snack or an ice cream.

Osterlars Rundkirke; This church is the biggest round church on Bornholm - it is fair priced and very beautiful. Don't forget go up the narrow steps found by the alter, first floor to visit the great historic exhibition and 2nd floor to visit the ghosts.

Baltic Sea Glass; Interesting place to watch the intricate skill of glass blowing. Very impressive, with a shop to pick a souvenir to take home with you.

Copenhagen



Wonderful, wonderful Copenhagen was the adopted home of Hans Christian Andersen - commemorated in the waterfront sculpture of his Little Mermaid. And, true to the spirit of its most famous resident, Copenhagen has a fairy tale magic all of its own.

Copenhagen has four cruise terminals, Langelinie Quay, Nordre Toldbod, Freeport (Frihavnen) and Ocean Quay (Oceankaj). Most cruise ships use Langelinie about 30 mins walk to the centre.

Discover the beauty of the Copenhagen cruises while visiting the delightful Tivoli Gardens, where you can soar above the city in a hot air balloon suspended from a Ferris Wheel. Stroll down leafy byways as dusk falls and hundreds of lights twinkle through the trees or in the shops and cafés of Stroget, Europe's longest pedestrianised shopping street.

With a variety of destinations to explore, cruises to Copenhagen have plenty to offer. Enjoy another stroll along the Nyhavn Canal, browsing the market stalls and looking at the fine old sailing ships moored near its banks. You will find more history at the magnificent Christiansborg Palace, the National Museum - home to fascinating Viking relics - and at Kronberg Castle - the former Elsinore of Shakespeare's 'Hamlet'.

Suggestions

A beautiful clean city and well worth a visit. There is no need to book a tour it is so easy to self-explore,

Depending on how you want to get to town there are many ways:

The shuttle bus drops you off at the city centre. A HOHO bus operates from the dockside, a tour cost €27pp (2016), it does take credit cards. It is quite an interesting, informative trip. There is an all-day the water taxi from the pier; this is good value for a first trip.

Finally a stroll into Copenhagen will take half an hour or so. If you do decide to walk then some of the sights (including little mermaid) are on the way into town. When you get to the main canal at the centre there are canal cruises which last about an hour and are very good.

Try and visit the Amalienborg which is where the Royal Palace is and you may get to see the changing of the guard.

For a very enjoyable trip try one of the canal boat trips. A ticket which is Kr80 (2016), just over €12 for a trip lasting an hour. If you can get on first then sit at the back, this way there is no one behind you or to your right, perfect.

Top tip for Copenhagen. Use the Netto boat for 1 hr trip round Copenhagen's canals. Same commentary than the other boat company but it's half the price.

It is a brilliant tour, you go under a number of bridges and some of them are extremely low that you can touch the ceiling of the bridge as you go through. They do warn you in plenty of time to make sure you are seated when approaching the bridge.

The Tivoli Gardens is about a mile walk through the shopping area. Although more of an amusement park with a DK100pp (2013), entry fee, it is a must see for families and those without. Many places to eat and to suit all budgets.

Fredericia



Fredericia is a town located in Fredericia municipality in the eastern part of the Jutland peninsula in Denmark,

Be prepared for the whole town came out to greet you. It is an easy walk to the town but there is not much to do in the town.

Suggestions

It is a walled city with a moat around, and hiking the walls is about a 3 km walk.

Fredericia Vold; You can not visit Fredericia, without paying Fredericia Vold a visit... A nice 1-2 hour stroll is highly recommended, reading the different signs, will give you some basic knowledge of its history!

Fredericia is very centrally located for excursion to Odense (H.C. Andersen) and Billund home of Lego and the first Legoland. Then there is the quaint city of Kolding. All within an hour's drive.

It will be easy for you to take the train to Odense or Kolding. The ship will berth within walking distance of the Railway Station. There are 3 to 4 trains per hour to Odense.

My suggestion, if you feel comfortable driving in a foreign country, is to rent a car. It takes less than an hour to get to Odense and about 45 minutes to get to Egeskov Castle.

For more information and to help plan your visit try here: <http://www.visitfyn.com/ln-int/funen/visitfyn>

Helsingør



Helsingør, also known as Elsinore, is a port city in eastern Denmark.

Less than 46 kilometers from the capital, Copenhagen, Helsingør is primarily a busy ferry port. Countless Swedes make the trip across the short stretch of water from Helsingborg for cheap supplies and simply to enjoy a day out. Yet, this unassuming town boasts a medieval Shakespearean past, for this is Elsinore, home to Hamlet's castle, the mighty Kronborg.

The medieval quarter is particularly pleasant to explore on foot and has some fascinating buildings, such as the beautifully preserved Carmelite Monastery (Karmeliterklostret) attached to St. Mary's Church (Sankt Mariæ Kirke). Dotted about the town, you'll find quaint boutiques, atmospheric cafés, and charming restaurants.

Suggestions

Kronborg Castle; Authentic piece of Danish history. Fantastic place in which you will spend at least 2-3 hours. This is a castle in true sense, surrounded by ocean water from all four sides one need to cross a bridge to go inside this castle. Great visit and interesting dive in place history starting from the dungeon to the upper floor chambers and big ball room.

Maritime Museum of Denmark; This museum is simply spectacular...from the ingenious architectural use of the dry-docks to the splendid exhibitions to the fine retail store, this museum fires on all cylinders. It is worth visiting just to see the architecture.

Cruise Destinations

Museum of Science and Technology; The place is huge and it has spectacular historical cars, airplanes, bikes, fire trucks, jets, steam engines, model trains, awesome stories and historical personalities for hours of fun and exploration. Great for kids, or even adults, as many things you can activate and touch.

Copenhagen is around 50 mins away.

Kalundborg



Kalundborg is a perfect gateway for adventures: A charming town, founded in app. 1150 by historic war hero Esbern Snare, with easy access to some of the grandest Viking historic sites in Denmark.

The friendly and warm atmosphere of Kalundborg will charm any cruise guest: Enjoy beautiful gardens, local museums, castles, and churches, fly high in the Kragerup Go High, the first high rope court in Denmark, take the children to BonBon Land, a large and fun amusement park.

The Viking Ship Museum and the Royal Cathedral of Roskilde is just one hour drive from Kalundborg, and legendary Viking Castle ruins Trelleborg can also be visited on an exciting day-trip.

Also within a day-trip: Copenhagen, 1 hr 30 mins away, Odense, 1 hr 30 mins away with the Funen Village, Hans Christian Andersen's house and the beautiful castles of Funen.

Suggestions

Church of Our Lady; The only Church in Denmark - "The Church of Our Lady" - have 5 towers and a long and interesting history. Absolutely worth a visit. The Church is nearby the city museum and the ruins of Kalundborg Castle so there is plenty of history here.

Kalundborg Museum; Gives a good insight in the area and the lives of the people in former times, there is some good exhibits where the former inside of the farms can be experienced as well as the machinery in former days.

Rosnaes Fyr; A really good view from top of the tower and excellent hikes around the area. There is a café for those coffee and cakes.

Skagen



Skagen, is Denmark's northernmost town and the area surrounding it. Occasionally known in English as The Scaw, it is situated on the east coast of the Skagen Odde peninsula in the far north of Jutland. Known for its Skagen watches.

This is a tender port.

Suggestions

A real nice city with two main areas : the port and a beautiful downtown which is full of restaurants, pubs, shops... It's a touristic place but a must see. A very relaxed atmosphere, extremely clean and inviting.

Østerbyvej is the most picturesque part of the town. Go for a walk along Østerbyvej and look at the beautiful houses and their gardens. When you are at the end of Østerbyvej, you will see Vippefyret (Skagen's Lever Light) on the little hill just ahead. From the hill you can see the sea and perhaps your ship by the harbour, to the right.

Cruise Destinations

Go for a walk to Iscafeen and buy a coffee, a glass of wine or a huge ice cream. Sit down outside in the sun (hopefully).

Slagter (slaughter) Munch is situated just across the open space in front of Iscafeen. This is a shop worth visiting. You might buy what you need among a vast variety of homemade and deliciously tasting products. Slagter Munch is well known in Skagen and famous in Denmark as well. People visiting Skagen always pay a visit to this shop. Slagter Munch is not far from Iscafeen.

Not far from Iscafeen and Slagter Munch is Skagen Museum, which presents some of the famous Skagen painters. This visit is a must to know some of Skagen's history.

If you want a lunch or a dinner I will recommend Brøndum Hotels Restaurant. Brøndum is just beside the old part of the museum and has a history related to the old painters in Skagen.

And as to Skagen watches; the shop is situated just across the street from the new part of Skagen Museum.

After you have visited the museum, take a walk along St. Laurentii vej in the Midtown. This is the major shopping street. There are lots of shops.

You might rent a bicycle if you want to visit some places outside the town. There are several possibilities. One bicycle rental is just beside the railway station.

Grenen (The Branch) is the place where the Skagerak meets the Kattegat and you can stand with one leg in each sea. Try this. You will not regret the trip to Grenen.

The Sand Covered Church is also just outside the town.

ESTONIA

For some ideas try: <http://www.atlasobscura.com/things-to-do/estonia>

Saaremaa



Saaremaa is the largest island in Estonia.

This is a small, pine-forested Estonian island that is a rather strange place for a cruise port! They have built a dock in the middle of nowhere and overall not a great deal to see or do.

There is nothing at the port with only a small fishing village, actually a small cluster of houses, many of them appearing to be holiday homes not too far away.

Suggestions

Try a tour to Kuressaare. This is the capital of the island around and around 40 minutes' drive. It is a pleasant town with some nice places around the town square for coffee/pastries or lunch. There is also a castle which is well worth visiting and which recounts the history of the island with particular reference to the occupation by the Russians and the Germans.

Tallinn



Estonia's cruise port Tallinn is a fascinating medieval capital. This multi-faceted jewel of a city and its architecture - a legacy of Teutonic, Polish and Russian rule - will have your eyes on stalks. From the spectacular onion domes of the Nevski Russian Orthodox Cathedral to the Baroque Toompea Castle (home of the Estonian Parliament) and the elaborate Gothic façade of the 13th century Raekoda, Europe's oldest town hall.

Another highlight of Tallinn is the magnificent St Mary's Cathedral, with its display of more than 100 coats of arms - but do take time out just to stroll the winding streets and cobbled squares of the city's atmospheric old town, where you will find exquisite amber jewellery, fine lacework and gorgeous woollen jackets at bargain prices.

Cruise ships dock about 500 mts from the city centre and 1 Km from the old town. Sometimes the ships berth in Muuga harbour, this is a commercial port and 17Km east of Tallinn.

A lovely little city. However, on a Sunday many of the shops etc are closed.

Suggestions

It takes only about 10 minutes (if that) to walk into the lower part of town. The old city seems to have it pitched perfectly - lots of food outlets, craft stalls and shops etc etc. Beautiful knitwear, embroidered household items, amber, Babushka dolls. The area that nearly everyone enters is through the Viru Gates, the 14th century round towers at the bottom of Viru street are actually only the fore gates of what was a much more complex gate system. They have become the symbol of the town. Here there is a new small complex of nicely built craft shops/stalls just 2 minutes' walk from the quayside.

Make sure to get a free map and follow the clearly marked recommended tourist route/walk, follow the route to through the town to the top - where the views are lovely and worth the walk.

One thing to mention it is very hilly so with wheelchairs you need strong arms to push it up or down the cobbled stones, and the self-propelled chairs I'm not sure if you can get to the top of the town.

There is a hop on/off open-top bus tour from port area, €13 each. It is not worth it as the main area for exploring is very compact, and beautiful. HOHO: <https://citytour.ee/en/booking>

There is a Tallinn Card. This basically lets you use the public transport system and gets you entry into most of the museums in and outside of town, including the Soviet built TV tower, about 40 minutes bus ride away. It also includes some of the towers like Fat Margaret (maritime museum inside).

If you walk then keep left at Fat Margaret (Tower) and walk half way alongside the City Walls, then enter turning left and up to the top. Turn right at McD's and continue until you reach the highest point, time for some pics of the roof tops, then walk down through the beautiful Old Town.

Another highlight of a Tallinn cruise is the magnificent St Mary's Cathedral, with its display of more than 100 coats of arms - but do take time out just to stroll the winding streets and cobbled squares of the city's atmospheric old town, where you will find exquisite amber jewellery, fine lacework and gorgeous woollen jackets at bargain prices.

Visit the workshops in Catherine's Passage to watch artisans creating leatherwork, jewellery and ceramics, or simply retire to a pavement café and relax while enjoying alfresco performances from brass bands, string quartets and strolling players.

FINLAND

Helsinki



Surrounded by the sea and its own archipelago, Helsinki, the Finnish capital, retains its nautical feel with many sailing events during the summer. Exploring the fascinating sights of Helsinki, cruise passengers will discover the city is also the country's main cultural focus, offering dance, ballet, opera, and other festivals.

The striking onion-shaped cupolas of the Uspensky Cathedral (modelled on the one in Odessa) are just one example of the Soviet influence on a country which achieved independence

less than 100 years ago. Highlights of cruises to Helsinki also include some of the traditional Finnish building in the Senate Square and the North Harbour.

Helsinki is a compact city - 'a pocket-sized metropolis', as it was once described - so it is easy to get around, especially in the historical centre. Or you can take the touring 'pub tram' and drink in the views, including the colourful flower market near the harbourfront.

After months of dark, cold winter, it is hardly surprising that the Finns pull out all the stops to celebrate the genuine warmth of their summers with outdoor events all around the city such as the Coming of Spring, Midsummer, the Helsinki Festival, and the Annual Night of the Arts.

Get up on top for the sail in and have your camera ready.

If you berth at South Harbour it is an easy walk into town. If at West Terminal you are about 3Km away.

Suggestions

This is an attractive city. Another easy place to wander around whilst not being wildly exciting and is an easy DIY although a bit spread out.

Close to where you dock there is a stop for the hop on/off open-top bus tour. Approx.: €28, excellent. Just watch though as the last one back leaves from the main cathedral area at 4.00pm.

Combined boat and bus €41 and €55 respectively

It has beautiful buildings and churches, lovely wide boulevards (full of VERY expensive shops). Take the short shuttle bus ride into Helsinki, walk up to the Church in the rock then back down through the market square to the waterfront.

Cruise Destinations

Turku



Turku, a city on the southwest coast of Finland, straddles the Aura River.

Dating from the 13th century, it's known for Turku Castle, a medieval fortress with a history museum, perched at the river mouth. Restaurants line the cobbled riverside streets. On the eastern bank lies the Old Great Square, a former trade hub, surrounded by grand buildings. The nearby Turku Cathedral houses a royal tomb and a museum.

Suggestions

Turku Castle; This 700 year old structure is amazing to tour. However, there are not many descriptions in English, but there are still plenty. If you have trouble getting around, this is not the tour for you. There are many steep, twisting and winding steps, uneven surfaces and low-clearance doorways. There is just no way to make this place handicapped-accessible.

That said, the outside and the courtyard are free to access and are quite photo-worthy. Definitely worth the price of admission to take the self-guided tour. Guided tours in English begin in June.

Handicrafts Museum; Turku handicrafts museum is a fantastic place to visit. It's a collection of small wooden houses rescued from the great fire of Turku, and brought together to make an artisans' village.

GERMANY

Kiel Canal



The Kiel Canal is a 98-kilometre long freshwater canal in the German state of Schleswig-Holstein.

If your ship is small enough you may be lucky enough to have this as one of the highlights of the cruise, the transit of the Kiel Canal. It is a complete delight to sail through the pretty countryside with lovely houses and gardens on the canal banks, lots to see and people to wave to. You will love going through the lock at the start of the canal.

Kiel



You may be lucky and be moored in a ferry port right in the centre of Kiel.

There is a chance to take a tour on a sailing ship from here. However, some people who had taken tours said that once in the bay the ships were unable to raise their sails because of the bad weather.

Suggestions

Kiel Botanical Gardens; and totally free! They are separated in to geographical areas of our planet. Don't mix up this garden (Botanischer Garten der Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel) with the Old Botanical Garden along the Förde (Alter Botanischer Garten), which is nice but not nearly as impressive.

Cruise Destinations

The Zoological Museum; The museum is cheap so don't hesitate to go. It is small but very interesting, The museum is in a great spot, and once inside, its quite cozy.

Rostock



Rostock, is the largest city in the north German state Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Rostock is on the Warnow river; the district of Warnemünde 12 kilometres north of the city centre is directly on the Baltic Sea coast.

Suggestions

Important examples of medieval and Renaissance architecture abound in Rostock's Old Town.

There is the 1490 Hausbaumhaus (Hausbaum House), one of the few wooden structures remaining in the city.

The Marienkirche (St. Mary's Church), from the same period, continues to cast a dramatic shadow, although the 355-foot steeple of the Petrikerche (St Peter's Church) tops the skyline (climb the 196 steps or take the half-minute elevator ride).

Adjacent to the "Marienkirche" stands the 13th-century Rathaus (Town Hall) with its 18th century baroque makeover.

Traditional gabled patrician houses line Wokrenterstrasse.

Some of the original city wall still remains, especially along the park-like Wallstrasse. Beyond the wall, villas and residences were built in the 1850s for an expanding middle class. The lively Kröpelinerstrasse (Kröpeliner Street) in the pedestrian zone is usually bustling with window-shoppers and friends chatting at sidewalk cafes. At its mid-way point, the Universitätsplatz (University Square) is a magnet for students, children and other young people. Typical Rostock hospitality is found above all in the so-called "KTV" (Kröpeliner Tor-Vorstadt) with its pubs, restaurants and bars - many of them the favourite haunts of Rostock students.

Plan on a trip to nearby **Warnemünde** while in the neighbourhood. Although Warnemünde has been part of Rostock since 1323, the two cities are different.

It is possible to do a tour to **Berlin** from here. However, it is over 130 miles from Rostock to Berlin and it is an extremely long day and the tour is normally pricey, always sold out early, Berlin is a great place to go and there is a mixed feeling on whether the trip is worth it. Tours do not return until mid to late evening.

Sassnitz



Sassnitz is a town on the Jasmund peninsula, Rügen Island, in Germany.

In the historic centre you can see mansions from the early days and the resort architecture and admire the ornate wooden balconies. There are restaurants, shops and beach hotels that offer visitors a lot of variety.

Suggestions

A short shuttle bus ride takes you to the centre of this little town from where you walk down a suspended pedestrian walkway to the quayside. Whilst Sassnitz is limited in its attractions it is a delightful port with plenty of little shops, friendly shopkeepers and a busy, lively quayside.

Travemünde



The Baltic resort of Travemünde lies on the boundaries of Lübeck. Travemünde is both a charming seaside town and major port with ferries linking Germany with Gothenburg, Helsinki and Malmö.

Suggestions

Among Travemünde's major attractions you cannot miss the Passat, one of the last surviving windjammers. Built in 1911, the Passat is now a floating museum ship.

Gesellschaftshaus; (seaside resort museum) open from March to December, daily 11.00 am - 5.00 pm (closed on Mondays).

Enjoy the fresh sea air walking along the 20-m-wide, 1.7-km-long Strandpromenade (beach promenade) with attractions like the Strandterrasse and the Seergarten and a fantastic view of the Bay of Lübeck, where you can watch the big ships.

There is a nice beach with a good boardwalk behind. The beach is clean with good facilities for children.

However, you will find more to do and see in Lübeck, 30 mins away.

Lübeck Oldtown; The buildings and cobbled streets in this lovely, ancient Hanseatic city are a delight. It's also quite busy with shops and places to eat. Photo opportunities every time you turn a corner.

Holstentor; The icon of Lübeck, the Holstentor is a splendid building that welcomes you to this beautiful Hanseatic city.

Hansemuseum; This is a very new museum, just a year or so old, that traces the history of the city of Lübeck and the Hanseatic League, a fascinating and important chapter in the development of modern Europe.

Warnemunde



Is a delightful German seaside town with many historical buildings. You can take an early train to Rostock, It's a lovely town with beautiful Gothic architecture and is known as the 'marzipan town.' Every street has cafes and confectioners with their windows full of umpteen items made of marzipan. Then you must return by river boat for lunch and a stroll back in.

The cruise ship docks in the centre of the town and only 300mts from the railway station and city centre.

Suggestions

It is possible to do a tour to Berlin from here. See [Rostock](#) for details.

If you go to Warnemunde late June into July they have festivals, lots of stalls on quayside.

Make sure you are out on deck for the Warnemunde sail-away; they give a great send off, as the ship moves away, all the people from the town spill out on to the dockside to wave the ship bon voyage.

LATVIA

Riga



Latvia's capital, is set on the Baltic Sea at the mouth of the River Daugava. It's considered a cultural centre and is home to many museums and concert halls. T

he city is also known for its wooden buildings, art nouveau architecture and medieval Old Town. The pedestrian-only Old Town has many shops and restaurants and is home to busy Livu Square, with bars and nightclubs.

Riga has the largest number of free WiFi spots per square kilometre and per head of the population in Europe, which is why Riga became the European capital of free WiFi in the summer of 2014.

Suggestions

Town Hall Square; The square itself is a cobblestone-paved plaza. It leads to dozens of Riga's main attractions, many within sight of the square's centre. It's lined with cafés, restaurants, and bars, as well as shops. The Tourist Information Centre is located here.

Old City; This is the place that you will spent most, if not all your time in Riga. It definitely deserves its reputation. The great art nouveau buildings that surround the area is what the centre is all about. Every building has its own history, and although it's a small town, the details on every building will catch your attention for a while. As you enjoy your walk around, day or night, you will find many places for a drink or a bite.

Vermanes Park; This crescent-shaped park is on either side of a canal that connects to Daugava River, and lies between Elizabetes Street and Old Town, Riga's second oldest park. Swan-like gondolas grace the canals, and various sculptures, fountains, stone lions, and gardens enhance the experience.

Ventspils



Ventspils is a town in north-western Latvia in the historical Courland region of Latvia, and is the sixth largest city in the country.

Beyond its bustling port, Ventspils is a city of beaches, public art and an incredible array of activities for kids.

The riverside promenade is rich in interesting monuments, and the city is sprinkled with reminders of the Cow Parades, in which artists imaginatively decorate bovine figures..

Suggestions

The Castle of the Livonian order; Great place to visit for history lovers . History meet modern world. Interesting old things and descriptions, video installations, not like ordinary, boring museums. The inside of the castle - lots to see and learn. The outside has pleasant surroundings, even kids have fun with archery. Educational and entertaining!

Renka Garden; Huge shoes, hat, hairbrush scattered over a large area and beckon to get to them. Original sculptures made of stone as well allow you to get acquainted with them closer. Park a little away from the centre but if you have time, be sure to take a walk there.

Narrow-Gauge Railway Track; The seaside Open-Air Museum's favourite exhibit and source of entertainment is the 600 mm narrow-gauge railway train Mazbānītis

Ventspils Beach; Nice beach with good facilities. Ideal for a few relaxing moments. Do not miss the big sailor cow at the port entrance just a short stroll from here.

LITHUANIA

Klaipėda



There is a shuttle laid on that takes you to old theatre square but it is a lovely walk into town, takes about ten minutes. As you leave the gates from the port a few local young people will give you a map. After a few minutes you will come to the first bridge that you can use to cross over the River Dane and that is the beginning of the town. Just before the bridge there were crew members connecting to the internet.

Suggestions

A fascinating place to wander around, there was a market there, that sells a lot of amber, some fabulous jewellery and wooden products and also an Amber Museum. Try a visit to the old castle, a lovely sculpture park and cobbled streets,

Take the ferry across to the Curonian Spit where the sandy beaches stretch for miles.

There used to be a tour to Palanga, a seaside town with a beautiful sandy beach. It is a very popular summer holiday destination, especially with naturists. The tour includes an interesting visit to the Amber Museum housed in a palace.

Some find it less sophisticated than Tallinn and Riga with a rural aspect.

NORWAY

Kristiansand



Norway's most southerly city and cruise port Kristiansand is also its sunniest. Kristiansand cruises offer beaches, superb scenery, fascinating history and range of attractions, all which makes Kristiansand cruises a big hit as well as being the most popular holiday spot for Norwegians.

Cruises to Kristiansand bring visitors into a renaissance city founded in 1641, with the history laid out in one of Norway's largest open-air museums - Vest Agder. It is also apparent in the 17th century Christiansholm Fortress and the rows of

attractive old wooden houses in the city centre.

After visiting Kristiansand, your cruise tour will take you just outside the city to explore the 960-year-old Oddernes Church and the Kristiansand Cannon Museum, with the world's second largest gun. Other tours take in a recreated Bronze Age settlement with its own fertility maze and the Setesdalsbanen Vintage Steam Railway.

Suggestions

Your ship will berth almost in the centre of, a lovely, picturesque town in Southern Norway. A pretty little seaside town. And has its own microclimate, the Fjords can be cloudy but it will be very hot and sunny in the town itself. Because of this, it is a Norwegian holiday spot with lots of yachts in a very pretty Marina.

A pleasant little place which can be covered comfortably in half a day, but a nice change from the bigger cities. There is an interesting Maritime Museum to look around, very modern and well laid out.

There is a small tourist train from ship to town centre but easily walkable. Nice town centre where there is a cathedral, fort, park with fountains and shallow pools, and of course plenty of shops

The tour to the German museum is extremely moving. There are stories of the horrendous torture the prisoners suffered and you can almost feel what it might have been like. Very thought provoking.

There is an excursion on a steam train though the surrounding countryside which is very interesting.

It is worth knowing that should you arrive here on a Sunday either accept that the most exciting thing you will do is stroll through silent streets, book an excursion or stay on board.

Oslofjord (Oslo)

The Oslofjord is an inlet in the south-east of Norway, stretching from an imaginary line between the Torbjørnshjær and Færder lighthouses and down to Langesund in the south to Oslo in the north. The 100-km-long Oslo Fjord is the scenic gem of the Oslo area. In the summer the fjord buzzes with life.

Oslo



Oslo, the capital of Norway, sits on the country's southern coast at the head of the Oslofjord. It's known for its green spaces and museums.

Ships sail along the tranquil Oslofjord to reach the Norwegian cruise port and capital Oslo; a spectacular city surrounded by snow-capped mountains and rolling green hills, it was founded in 1050 and has been Norway's capital since the end of the 11th century.

The modern city, an eclectic mix of ancient castles, frescoed 18th century houses, vast parks and glittering lakes, is a delight. Oslo cruise must-sees include the Viking House Museum with its display of 9th century longboats, the Munch-museet, which houses works by Edvard Munch, and the medieval Akershus Castle - a warren of secret passages, crypts, dungeons and magnificent halls.

Cruises to Oslo will also give you the opportunity to enjoy the traditional Norwegian cuisine. Near the castle, in Aker Brygge, you will find some of Norway's best restaurants serving classic dishes like fiskesuppe (fish soup), fenalar (cured leg of mutton) and multer med krem (cloudberry with cream). With such a variety of activities available for Oslo cruises make some time too for a stroll through verdant Frogner Park, home to more than 190 masterpieces by the famous sculptor Gustav Vigeland.

Suggestions

If you like bustling cities this is the one for a city break.

The HOHO buses are right by the port. Round trip about NK180pp. The route covers all the main Oslo sights and it takes approx. 1hr 30 minutes. Compared to onboard tours and prices, it is well worth the money.

It is an easy walk from the berth in Oslo to the Royal Palace and then onward to Frogner Park with its open-air display of hundreds of Vigeland sculptures, allegedly showing the seven ages of man (and woman), obviously before the advent of clothes! Back down through the City, past the Norwegian Parliament building. The National Opera House is fantastic and well worth a look and walk up the sloped wall/roof (yes, really!).

Try the Ice Bar The bar itself is quite small. Everything is ice there, even the glasses, and it has some really good ice sculptures. A bit pricy, entrance works out at about £16 but you get a warm cape and gloves to wear and a free drink. Kids are half price and they get a non-alcoholic drink. Like most of Norway additional drinks are expensive in comparison with the UK; cocktails (very small) are around £8 and shots are about the same. You will find Magic Ice Located in the heart of downtown Oslo near Grand Hotel and Hotel Bristol.
<http://www.magicice.no/>

There are some really good (not stuffy) museums a ferry ride across the harbour in Bygdøy. There is one with a Viking ship in it, another with a model of Kon Tiki and another with one of the polar expedition ships.

A trip to Drobak a little village on the fjord is worthwhile. It is billed as a Christmas village as there is a Christmas shop which is open all year round.

POLAND

Gdynia



Gdynia is a port city on the Baltic coast of Poland. It's known for its modernist buildings, including the Museum of the City of Gdynia, which has exhibits about local history. Kościuszki Square, with a distinctive fountain as its centre, leads to the waterfront.

This sea port may not have a lot going for it but it is quite pretty and is very welcoming & clean. It's actually a very pleasant place to have a wander especially if the sun is shining.

The journey into Gdynia by shuttle bus is about 10 mins max.

Near to where the shuttle bus drops you off is a small grassed area with a number of seats, including deck chairs. Here you will find the ships staff using the free wifi here.

Suggestions

Orlowo Pier; This pier which is smaller version of pier in Sopoty is more intimate and there is no entrance fee. There is a beach fairly close to it coming from the south and couple small restaurants on the other side. Orlowo cliff is in short walk distance from here.

Gdynia Beach; Lovely clean beach, soft sand and long promenade. Lots of places to eat overlooking the beach, and lovely market-style stalls with souvenirs and take away food.

Dar Pomorza Museum; A very inexpensive museum ship to visit. It is not for those with limited mobility as the steps are steep and narrow. However, a very well laid out museum, and well worth the time to take to spend 30 minutes or so looking around.

Gdynia is normally the port for Gdansk;

Gdansk



Considering Gdansk was literally flattened during WW2 they have done a magnificent job in rebuilding it back to its former glory. It's not a big place, entered over a large bridge, through the town walls and onto a main street (pedestrianised) of old buildings, many painted, shops and restaurants.

There is normally a shuttle to here.

Gdansk is one of the amber centres of the world and the Old Town is a superb place to browse for amber jewellery and goods.

Suggestions

It is a very pleasant place to wander and has many historical features which have been restored. Interesting photos in the gatehouse at the end of the street showing Gdansk after the war.

There are a number of options.

- * The Old Town is adjacent to the river, there are 4 or 5 interesting site-seeing streets to look at.
- * The Lech Walesa shipyards plus the Westerplatte (start of the 1939 war) experience
- * The lovely seaside resort of Sopot, former playground of Europe's ruling classes.

Cruise Destinations

We were there last year, did all of the above and thoroughly enjoyed it.

Along by the riverside there are numerous bars, restaurants and shops (plus a street leading from the river which is crammed with shops selling amber). Here also is an old wharf building, the remnants from an age when the riverside was a hive of activity.

RUSSIA

When visiting Russia make sure you let your credit card company know that you are going there, some people had their credit card stopped by their credit card company.

The majority of shops and restaurants take a mixture of credit cards, US\$, Euro or Rubbles. However, the smaller cafes and shops will only take Rubbles. Also, be careful, your change could well be in Rubbles. My suggestion is it is best take some Rubbles with you.

St Petersburg



On cruises to St. Petersburg you will usually stay here overnight; after all the jewel in the Baltic's crown deserves no less, for here - on the broad banks of the River Neva and in the magnificent palaces and churches which characterise the city's skyline - you will find Russia at its most dramatic, flamboyant and captivating.

Only the small cruise ships can berth close to the centre. All the rest berth at Marine Façade.

Put the Hermitage Museum right at the top of your St. Petersburg cruise sightseeing list; its magnificent buildings and palaces contain the world's most comprehensive collection of art and sculpture, including works by Leonardo da Vinci, Gauguin, Rembrandt and Matisse.

Other highlights of all St. Petersburg cruises include the Yusupov Palace (where 'the mad monk' Gregori Rasputin was dramatically murdered in 1916); Catherine the Great's palace (with its breath-taking 978-foot white, gold and blue façade); St Isaac's Cathedral (which has marble walls studded with semi-precious stones); the onion-spired Church of Spilled Blood and the battleship Aurora, whose guns signalled the start of the Russian Revolution.

A word of warning to anyone on a visit to St Petersburg. You are not allowed to take photos on the quayside and in the immigration hall. You could end up with a hefty fine. This will be noted in your Horizon paper.

Now, Visas: If you are arriving by cruise ship and staying here for less than 72 hours, you do not need a visa provided that you are escorted around the city by an approved tour guide. If you are thinking of just walking off the ship then you will require a Visa.

Cruise companies would like to people to think you must book through them, because their tours include a visa, but that is NOT true! Local tour companies have a deal with the Russian government meaning a temporary visa is included in the tour price. So, by going with a local firm you will save a lot of money.

Cruise Destinations

Some advice and to just to dispel a few myths:-

This is a from Alla's (one tour operator in St Petersburg) website and might help to clarify the requirements:

Visas are not required when touring with Alla Tours. Our company is one of the first private companies that started working with cruise passengers. Since 2005, none of our clients have needed a regular visa. We provide our clients with documents, including tour tickets that confirm your booking with Alla Tours. Your tour tickets act as a visa when you pass through Russian immigration in the cruise terminal. You will need ONLY your Alla Tours ticket and your passport.

Here is some formal information about the requirements for visa-free passengers: According to Russian Immigration Law, tourists arriving to St. Petersburg on cruise ships have the right to disembark the ship without a regular Russian tourist visas provided they have met the following conditions:

Duration of stay in Russia should not exceed 72 hours.

Cruisers should overnight on-board the cruise ship.

Cruisers should utilize the service of a Russian Tour operator. The right to tour without visas is given to all cruise passengers matching the above conditions regardless of Tour operator.

If the majority of cruisers experience is the norm, then tales of traffic chaos are grossly exaggerated. Most cruise lines endeavour to plan Baltic cruises so that you are in port over a weekend when traffic is light.

Don't worry too much about the local currency - if you have US dollars or Euros that's fine.

When going ashore in St Petersburg, please take hand wipes and hand gel with you because the public loo facilities (even in The Hermitage) are awful.

The Russian immigration authorities are not determined to make your visit as difficult as possible. If you present your passports and the travel passes provided by your tour guide you can clear immigration in two minutes. Not many smiles but quite efficient.

Suggestions

This is one port visit where the 'Do My Own Thing' brigade has to put their hands in their pockets. To start you would need a Russian visa, cabs can only come to the dock gates and depending where the ship is anchored it could be a mile plus to walk to the ship. The Russian signage is almost impossible to read so unless you have knowledge of the language you will really struggle.

The main suggestion is do a private tour. There are several companies that offer these but beware that some are USA based - go with a Russian one - and don't pay anything in advance. They will deal with the visa issue in just the same way as going on a P&O tour would do.

One recommendation is TJ Travel. TJ's website is at <http://st-petersburg-tours.ru/>. where you will find pages of similar testimonials and a lot of background information on this company. Irena the guide is brilliant and her English is perfect (she had taught Russian at Durham University).

Another is Alla Tours <https://alla-tour.com/>

They have set tours of if a group then they can tailor your tour to whatever you want. If you want to shop they can do it, if you want the Catherine Palace/Hermitage/Church of the spilled blood etc then they can drop you on the steps outside and have tickets already organised which allows you to bypass all of the queues. The cost for 2 days of tours which included organising the visas (done by email before you leave the UK all you have to do is print them off and present them at the passport check), shopping, Entrance to the Catherine palace, Entrance to the Hermitage, Church of the spilled blood, Nevegski (sp) Prospect, A ticket for the Hydrofoil ride, a ticket for the Underground ride, markets and other sights as well was \$300 each (\$285 with the discount) and you only have to hand over the money on the 2nd day. Pick up and drop off is from the ship.

Cruise Destinations

Others have used SPB, Red October and Anastasia and I have not read a bad report of any of them. I would suggest that you Google something like "St Petersburg Tour Companies" and have a browse. Tours, including visas are around \$300pp (2016). Normally there are no cancellation or credit card fees.

Alla tours also say that if something awful happens and you miss the ship they guarantee to get you to the next port of call

Excursions

If you do not want to DIY and if offered on the ship then the St Petersburg on foot tour does not disappoint. Your guide will be very knowledgeable, with good English, and the technology used will allow you all to follow their talk and not get lost. There are exquisite buildings and, of course, a lot of history.

The Cruise line 'Simply St Petersburg' tour is good and you will have a great time. With P&O it was £269pp (2017) minus any peninsular discount for 2 very full days in a minibus with 14 people. You will do the hermitage, church of the spilled blood, lunch in a restaurant, canal trip, underground trip, and go around a small food market on day 1 followed by St Katherine's palace, hydrofoil trip, packed lunch on day 2.

For souvenirs go to the market place by the Church of the SB, they have exactly the same merchandise as the tourist shops but cheaper prices, helpful stall holders.

St Catherine's Palace- wow! gold everywhere, and the amber room was stunning. Headsets meant you can hear without crowding round the guide.

There is a Diamond museum and a Gold Museum within the Hermitage. Some tour operators tell their clients, that only they can get in or that it is so secret that it takes a special handshake to get in, well they are not secret or private at all, they are public rooms but are run like separate museum which require an additional ticket.

There are two ways of getting the tickets, buy a ticket and wait 10-20 minutes for a group of 15 to form of other walk-ups so the scheduled museum employee guide can conduct the tour of the area, or book with any tour operator which has contracts with the museums. Right now, it is Arctur, Baltic Travel, DenRus and Deneesi, Of those the only one doing independent shore excursions is DenRus, an American company, Deneesti, an Estonian company, does occasionally. For the other tour operators, they must buy tickets from a ticket agent or go to the museum and buy directly. But they have no problem getting them if they want them. It costs 3000 rubles per group of 15 people.

River cruise- an evening tour along the river. Very leisurely!

SWEDEN

Gothenburg



The approach to Gothenburg's cruise port is the perfect introduction to this large, bustling, but very friendly Swedish city. Embark on a cruise to Gothenburg and you will sail through a beautiful archipelago of small islands and past sleepy old fishing villages along the mainland coast.

Your first impression of the city will be that it is so very green - there are parks and gardens galore including some extraordinarily colourful botanical ones full of rare orchids, roses and butterflies. While enjoying your Gothenburg cruise

take the opportunity to visit the Liseborg Amusement Park which has some eye-popping theme park rides but it is also beautifully landscaped with flowers and plants.

For shopping enthusiasts, Gothenburg cruises offer a diverse collection of retail stores and venues to enhance their shopping experience. In the city centre, there are all the latest designer stores and an array of cafés and restaurants in or around the main street: the Avenue. Elsewhere in the city, Nordstan is Scandinavia's largest shopping centre. And don't forget to also look out for the impressive Opera House and Maritime Centre. If you make your way to the shopping mall there is a tourist info office.

Suggestions

Just behind the tourist office is an indoor craft market. Where you can purchase handmade Swedish glass.

For a tour try the Volvo Museum. If this is one of the excursions on your cruise, leave it alone, it is only 150 metres from the port and the entrance fee is £6. This has been known to cost £30, bit of a difference.

Botanical Garden (Botaniska Trädgården); Garden with comprehensive collection of plants, primarily for those with horticultural interests but also an attractive place to visit. There are different gardens within the garden as a whole - a Japanese garden, a rhododendron garden, a kitchen garden and a herb garden, amongst others. There are greenhouses for a rainy-day visit. Good photo opportunities with almost all year round displays

Universeum; From aquarium to dinosaurs, there is something for everyone. Lots of hands-on learning activities for kids & adults, plus animals in natural habitats.

Helsingborg



Helsingborg is a coastal city in southern Sweden, across the Øresund Strait from Denmark, which is to the west.

One whiff of the refreshing seaside air and you'll fall instantly in love with Helsingborg. Enjoy beautiful beaches and refreshing public baths or stroll the gardens of Sofiero Palace and Fredriksdal Open-Air Museum. Climb the stairs up Kärnan castle tower for panoramic views of the harbor. Helsingborg has many restaurants featuring global cuisines, many making great use of local ingredients.

Suggestions

Free public wifi. The City of Helsingborg offers free public wifi at several places in the city centre.
<http://kartor.helsingborg.se/wifi/#13/56.0363/12.7022>

Sofiero Slott; A well maintained old castle with wonderful surroundings and a lot of botanical trees, bushes and plants. Many times during the summer season live music is performed on the lawn in front of main building.

Cruise Destinations

Karnan - the keep of Helsingborg; When you visit Helsingborg at a clear day, the visit of Kärnan is a must-do. Each level in the tower offers an interesting insight into history and when you finally enter the top, you are given a great view over town and towards Denmark. Worth the fee!

Radhuset; The Town Hall looks like it is a fairy tale castle. An amazing looking building. Tours of the inside are available.

Slottshagsparken; It's one of the most beautiful parks of Helsingborg, close to the city centre and great place to take some romantic photos. The best time is of course during the summer.

Tropikariet; it doesn't look like much on the outside, but that the inside is amazing. Here you can meet Lemurs, Meercats, snakes, reptiles, small monkeys, birds, spiders and much more.... in the basement there is a huge shark-tank and many exotic kinds of fish.

Karlskrona



This is a tender port. Between October and April there is a free train to take you to the Maritime Museum. The museum is free to enter and is excellent. There were loads of beautiful models of sailing ships, reconstructions of various workshops to do with shipbuilding such as rope making, coopering, carpentry etc and some lovely exhibits outlining the rather precarious life of a sailor in those days. Most of the exhibits had English translations and there were audio headsets too. Get back on the train and head uphill the short distance to the town centre where you will be dropped

off in a large square. However, apart from the shops and the museum there is little else here.

Nynäshamn



Nynäshamn is in the southernmost outpost of the Stockholm archipelago. It is beautiful and strategic location in the outer archipelago has always been of great importance.

This is another port for Stockholm. It is the easier option for Cruise Ships but of course a lot further away. This is a Tender port. The distance to Stockholm is about an hour by coach. You can go by train. Again about an hour, I think

there are 2 trains leaving every hour. The train station is rather close to the port. You can read more about public transports: <http://www.sl.se/english/>

Nynäshamn itself offers the genuine side of Sweden and more besides. Local beer, food from the region and a unique cultural history with rune stones, churches from the 1100s, Sweden's oldest lighthouse and even military installations from the Cold War era.

Suggestions

Rent a bicycle; It's easy to experience some of the best of Nynäshamn by cycle. Enjoy the beautiful Strandvägen, cycle out to the spa on the island of Trehörningen or discover the shops in the centre of Nynäshamn. Bicycles can be picked up and returned at the Tourist Information Office at the cruise ship pier or at the Tourist Centre in the Fishing Harbour. Open all day. Prices include helmet.

Cruise Destinations

Mopedum - The Swedish nostalgia museum; Get an insight into Swedish history with a focus on the years between 1952 and 1979 when the so-called mopeds dominated youth culture here. As well as some 70 mopeds, there are other Swedish objects from the time when the Swedish model created welfare rarely or never surpassed. There is also a traditional Swedish café where you can eat lunch and drink coffee the Swedish way with Swedish buns, cakes and sandwiches.

ChokladHuset (the House of Chocolate); ChokladHuset is situated in the south part of Nynäshamn. ChokladHuset also offer chocolate tastings where you are guided through the history of chocolate, growing and manufacturing of chocolate, differences between chocolate, cocoa beans and qualities.

This is a port for **Stockholm**

Stockholm



One of the most beautiful cities in Scandinavia, Sweden's capital and cruise port Stockholm - where the Baltic meets lovely Lake Malaren - is approached through a necklace of 14 islands and myriad small islets set in sparkling seas, as you will discover on our Stockholm cruises.

If you are up and about then make sure that you have a chance to enjoy the long and beautiful sail in/out though the labyrinth of small islands, it is about 50 miles, and really pretty with its little summer houses set amongst the trees

and the shoreline is very very close in places.

There are two terminals in Stockholm, Stadsgarden, very close to the city centre and Frihamnen; from here you need the shuttle, bus or taxi to get into town.

There is another port at, Nynashamn. This is an easy option for Cruise Ships but of course a lot further away. This is a Tender port. The distance to Stockholm is about an hour by coach. You can go by train. I think there are 2 trains leaving every hour. The train station is rather close to the port. You can read more about public transports: <http://www.sl.se/english/>

With the variety of attractions Stockholm cruise tours take in, don't dally too long, though - make time to explore the city's many waterways in a glass-topped sightseeing boat, which will give you the best views of Stockholm's dazzling architecture and some of the 40 elaborate bridges which link its islands.

Cruise Destinations

Suggestions



Near to where you disembarking in Stockholm there is a HOHO bus, about 50 yards away. A full tour is about 300 Krona, pp (2016). You can also follow the signposting for a short walk to the water bus that does a circular hop-on hop-off route. If you're in the city berth then it goes from right next to the ship. They both take credit cards.

Do not bother with a trip in Stockholm use the shuttle into the centre and then buy a water taxi ticket for the day, not much difference in price between the hour/day tickets, you then have easy access to all the major attractions around the city centre.

Stockholm is beautiful with its old cobbled streets, some rather grand buildings and its waterways. It is about a 20-25 minute flat walk from the port, and some people used the shuttle bus into the centre. The shuttle bus usually drops people off and picks them up near the Opera. From there it is a flattish walk along the quayside to the Vasa museum - and it is truly not something to miss. The Old Town, plus the Vasa Museum and the Town Hall etc are all within easy walking distance of the usual shuttle bus stop.

The heart of this famous city is its medieval quarter, Gamla Stan, which dates from the 13th Century. Here you can stroll through narrow cobbled streets lined with quirky shops and atmospheric cafés. Embark on one of our cruises to Stockholm for the opportunity to explore the spooky Gothic cathedral of Storkyrkan, discover the elaborate 17th Century Nessel Palace and visit Sweden's oldest museum, the Livrustkammaren - home to five centuries' worth of royal carriages, clothes and weaponry (its most unusual exhibit is Streiff - the stuffed stallion which once carried King Gustav II into battle).

For the dedicated shopper there are some very nice shops and shopping malls in its pedestrianised street, but be warned Stockholm is very expensive; a prawn sandwich was 180SEK and a couple of coffees at 80SEK for two.

Consider the Vasa Viking Museum Tour. Take the courtesy bus into town and walk along the shore to the Vasa Museum. It takes about 20 minutes at a good pace. The museum is amazing, but photography is difficult. There is a coffee shop which is reasonably priced. Try and get there before 10am and avoid the queues.

The Changing of the Guard at the Royal Palace followed by a self-tour the Royal Palace is good. Walk through the Old Town to their famous Town Hall of Blue Room fame. Cost was 110SEK pp. Then there is the Kon-tiki Museum (anyone remember Thor Heyerdahl?).

The SkyView is an attraction that takes you to the top of the world's largest spherical building, the Ericsson Globe, a Stockholm landmark. From the apex 130 meters (425 feet) above sea level, you get a fantastic view encompassing all of Stockholm. The two SkyView gondolas depart every 10 minutes, and the entire visit takes about 30 minutes. Restaurant, café and souvenir shop are adjacent to SkyView. If visiting the Skyview the current cost is 150 SEK each (around £14) 2016.

The waterways cruise via the ship was £41pp

The Abba museum is great fun at around £24pp

Visby



Visby is a town on the Swedish island of Gotland in the Baltic Sea and is one of Scandinavia's preeminent medieval cities.

Every August, it hosts its medieval week, complete with authentic dress, feasts and jousting. But you don't need to visit Visby in August to get a sense of its medieval history. Just follow the cobblestone streets that wind throughout the city, take a tour of its Old Town and visit the 13th-century church. You certainly can't miss the 13th-century wall that stretches three kilometres around the city and was

once used as the city's defence from intruders.

Suggestions

Visby City Wall; It's hard to miss the wall when visiting Visby, but it is well worth giving it some extra time. Take a walk alongside the wall, climb some stairs in one of the towers and read the signs explaining some of the events during the lifetime of the wall. It is extremely well preserved and a really impressive landmark.

Gotlands Museum; This is a fantastic museum with a lot of good items. It is well worth a visit. The historical artefacts are located in different rooms with a team for each room.

Botaniska Trädgården; Nice garden with lots of places to rest and to enjoy the moment. Updated information boards with maps over the garden, event calendar as well as botanical details.

A little tip: For a whole week in August people dress themselves in clothes as true to the Medieval Times as possible and turn the clock back to the year 1361. The old-looking walled town of Visby makes *Medeltidsveckan* even better. The town gives the impression that you have stepped back in time.

TRANS-ATLANTIC

MADEIRA

Funchal



When you visit Madeira it will become clear why this destination is known as the *Garden Island* - it is simply awash with colour from a breath-taking display of sub-tropical plants and flowers. So it is hardly surprising that large and colourful flower markets are one of the most arresting features of Funchal, Madeira's capital.

Cruise visitors here will discover that the market town is easily walkable although, the further inland you explore, the steeper and narrower some of the streets become. Locally

made wicker furniture, lacework and tapestries all make good buys along with the ubiquitous Madeira wine.

Funchal is also the base for tours to the islands botanical gardens; the fishing village of Camara de Lobos where Churchill went to paint; Camacha, the wicker centre; the levada walks, part of an ancient irrigation system; and to Reids Hotel for traditional afternoon tea, making cruises to Madeira a must see.

Suggestions

The cruise port is right near the center of the city, but the dock is still some distance from the main oceanfront drive. Most cruise lines have shuttles to the centre of town. It's walkable, if you are inclined to walk and very able, at around half a mile away. Cabs are also readily available and are quite reasonably priced (\$5 each way, more or less).

Depending on what you want to see this is an easy DIY destination. The town is very pretty with lots of small shops. The Marina has lovely restaurants and bars.

There is an open top bus takes you quite a way around the island at a cost of €14pp. The trip takes about 1 1/2 hours. It is a hop on or off bus so you can get off any time to explore by yourself. Bus stop just along the prom that does a circular tour either blue or yellow routes. Good value and you see most of Funchal and its neighbourhoods. You go up to a super view point overlooking the town and round to Camara de Lobos which is a pretty fishing village. There are 3 different routes.

Cable car prices. If you are thinking about using the cable car then these may help. €11pp single. A combined Cable car and Monte Gardens is €16pp. (2017 prices). A taxi from the very top straight to the ship will set you back €20 - €30.

If you have never been before then the *Gardens at Monte* is well worth the visit. Get the shuttle bus to prom, walk east to the Cable Car station. Get a ticket to the top. If you sit facing backwards you will enjoy the splendour revealed of elevated views of Funchal and your ship in harbour. There is a nice cafe at the bottom of the gardens that offer a tasting of Madeira wine.

Now coming down, before you purchase your cable car ticket decide on how you want to get back down, walk, toboggan or cable car.

If you decide on the cable car then purchase a return and gardens combined ticket.

If you decide toboggan it is €25 for one €30 for two or €35 for three. They take your photo on the way down and you can buy it at the bottom €10, it is really easy to do. (2017 prices). If you are looking at cruise line prices then for P&O the cable car and toboggan ride in Madeira and it's £47pp. (2016)

Cruise Destinations

From where the toboggan finishes you have a choice, walk, taxi or bus. The taxis charge €25 - €30 to take you back to town. The bus is about €3, and takes you direct to the town, the taxi drivers will tell you otherwise though. (2017 prices) If walking from where the basket drops you off it is steep but not too far, about 20mins, into centre.

There is also the Botanical Gardens. These are the ones with the checkerboard gardens, the ones you see in all the pictures. There are two entrances one for buses and taxis, about half way up the garden, and one for the cable car at the very top of the garden. By Cable car, it takes two to get to these gardens. When you get off in Monte, you walk to your right and down a path which then gets you to the cable car which takes you to the Botanical gardens. If you prefer the bus it goes from the central bus station opposite the cable car entrance, or get a taxi both the bus and taxi will drop you to outside the main entrance to the gardens.

Now, if you are planning a visit. It is worth noting the Botanical Gardens are not wheelchair or pushchair friendly, it is on a steep hill, there are very small cobble stones on the pathways all around the gardens that you will find very challenging to walk round. Yes it has some flat areas but also with some very steep uneven paths, rocky in places, and the areas are not well sign posted so it was all trial and error. If you have mobility problems then there are lots of areas you cannot get access to. This is not mentioned by P&O and I take it other cruise lines..

There is no garden map available, they are dotted around the gardens and difficult to find. For our visit, which was in December, we both feel it was not worth it. The only thing there we felt was the area you see on the many photos of these gardens. Maybe it was the rain, maybe the wind or maybe it was the time of year, lots of flowers/plants passed their best date, but we both decided it is not a patch on Monte. On the plus side there is a nice cafe at the botanical side of the cable car where we had a well-earned coffee and Portuguese tart.

DIY by cable car, the cost pp was €31 rtn, (2017) including entrance fee to gardens. The Bus, No 31 or 31a, is €6pp rtn (2016). This excursion with P&O is £40pp. (2016)

However, there are many gardens in Madeira so if you have visited Monte try one of the others.

Blandys wine distillery is worth a visit if you have the time. There are three tours to choose from; 30 min, 45 min and an hour, at the end of the tour they give you a glass of the wine that they produce. There is a shop that you can buy the wine from and the bathroom facilities were very clean.

Eco City Tour charges £40 per Tukxi, (2016) for a one hour tour, and they are electric so easy on the driver. Think they seat three people.

A visit to Reids Hotel in Funchal for afternoon tea, it's a short taxi ride away from where the ship docks and taxis will be there all day! Be sure to ask for a table on the Terrace. If you go to Reids independently you can book on the Internet but ask for a table on the tea terrace - the P&O tour will sit in an inside room. Prices are (2016) P&O Tea at Reids - £48pp. Booked direct on the Terrace €35.50pp.(2018) Note: On the Terrace they have a dress code of smart casual, no shorts, no T shirts and no sports attire.

Take a private taxi tour. There will be lots of taxi drivers with lovely air conditioned cars around, a choice of routes too. A 3 hour trip should set you back around €70. Ideal if you have accessibility issues and you want to see the area.

Try a walk down the street with the painted doors. They are very cleverly done by local artists. They are in Santa Maria Street, just at the back of the cable car. Best to go early when the doors are closed as some of them are on cafe doors and you do not get the full effect when they are open.

If you are into football then a visit to the Cristiano Ronaldo's museum, The Museu CR7, showing all his trophies is worth a visit. It is not far from where the ships berth. Closed on Sundays.

Cruise Destinations

There is also a pretty good dolphin watching operator there which leaves from the port on a catamaran for a couple of hours for as little as €30 per person.

One of the best kept secrets is Porto Moniz's lava pools. It is like a giant natural swimming pool/lido and it costs just a couple of Euros to get in. There are changing facilities, toilets, sunbeds a café bar and it is a really pleasant day out. There is not much in Porto Moniz itself (I think perhaps a small aquarium and museum), just a couple of tourist shops, bars and restaurants.

The Cabo Girao Cliffs and skywalk are a highly-recommended tourist attraction of Madeira, and best of all it is absolutely free and the attraction is always open. For this either a taxi or an excursion is recommended. You can take the bus. The most useful route is the number 7 from Funchal to Ribeira Brava which stops in Câmara de Lobos and Cabo Girao. This service leaves Funchal at 9:30, gets to Cabo Girao at 10:20 and there is a return bus at 11:25. A single ticket costs €2.75 and the exact timetable can be found on the Rodoeste website

You may have heard of the Green Train of Madeira, this is located in the resort of Câmara de Lobos, about 15 mins from Funchal. It costs €7pp and you can purchase the tickets from any tourist shop. It takes about 1hr 15 min total and stops at the top of the mountain for 15/20min for you to enjoy the views.

Tour operator:

Try Strawberry World Tours & Happy World Tours

Porto Santo



Porto Santo Island is a Portuguese island 43 kilometres northeast of Madeira Island in the North Atlantic Ocean; it is the northernmost and easternmost island of the archipelago of Madeira.

Porto Santo is one long beach with a bit of an island attached. Along its nine kilometres of soft white sands, you'll find just a handful of hotels and restaurants.

Suggestions

Pico Castelo Viewpoint; This hill top offers a splendid view over Vila Baleira, the harbour and the beach. Beside the canon there are old mills and extended view to the eastern point of the island. And it's very windy

Pico de Ana Ferreira; Within a short walking distance from Vila Baleira, Pedreira do "Piano" is a place you might want to see. The short hike goes around Pico da Ana Ferreira and will give you a panoramic view of the island.

Quinta das Palmeiras; This small botanical garden is the life's work of one man and he did a fine job. The birds, fish and turtles add to the experience too. There is a small bar onsite too.

AZORES

Horta



This is a tender port. It is a very small and picturesque town. Sometimes you are met with a greeting table set out with tasters of local food and drink.

Not a great deal to do but there is a museum and the seafood restaurants are OK. However, some cruisers have preferred Horta to Ponta Delgada. Try a walk up to the marina to see all the painted murals left by all the different yachtsmen and sailors who have called here over the years.

Ponta Delgada



A strong Portuguese influence pervades Ponta Delgada from the stylish colonial architecture to the food and wine served in its restaurants. But that should really come as no surprise as this is the main Portuguese Azores cruise port even if these remote Atlantic islands are 760 miles distant from their parent country.

The capital of Sao Miguel, the largest of the nine mountainous, thickly-forested Azores islands, Ponta Delgada is probably the most spectacularly beautiful, too. It certainly

has the most dramatic attraction: Sete cidades. This is a 15 square mile extinct volcanic crater in which two separate lakes have formed - one deep blue, the other emerald green. They make a remarkable sight, not to mention a great photo-opportunity.

There is also a chance to bathe in the volcanic streams and therapeutic sulphur springs where locals come to picnic, burying their stewpots and sweetcorn so that they are cooked by natural heat.

Suggestions

Very much like Madeira, the town is very picturesque. It has the usual bars/shops/restaurants and interesting architecture. However, there is not really a great deal to see and do though it is a pleasant enough town for a wander. For free Wi Fi go to the shopping centre

There is a vast difference to the island from one side to the other, with the far side of the island quite bleak and very rugged but certainly worth seeing.

A taxi tour round island should set you back about €50. A shorter one to Sete Cidades will set you back €25 for two. Then maybe a horse and carriage ride around the town and back to the ship for €10pp.

There is a "little road train" that does a short tour lasting less than one hour. You can hire a Segway from near the tourist information office or the ship had a tour on them as well.

If you do not want the shuttle to town then a taxi from ship to market cost €10 each way.

On the plus side, the drinks seem to be very cheap with wine and beer being just €1 a glass.

Tour Operators

For a local tour operator: Amazing Tours and Rui Medeiros:

Cruise Destinations

Amazing Tours very informative and quite funny - excellent English. He can take eight in a mini bus to all the major places on the island it is a really enjoyable day. His rate is less than half of the cruise ship tour cost and you will see more. Tell him what time to be back at the ship and he will have you back on the dot.

Another local tour operator is Rui Medeiros and he will get you back to the ship in plenty of time for sailaway. His web site is www.vivazores.com he has a car and a people carrier. His tour takes in the national park [places that the bigger tour buses cannot reach].

Praia de Vitoria



Unspoilt and wild, with an infallible craggy coastline lies Terceira, the third largest island in the Azores archipelago. Packed with characterful towns, tranquil churches, springs, caverns, lakes and rolling patchwork pastures, this island brings rejuvenation and peace to its visitors.

Praia da Vitoria is tucked in the far eastern corner of subtropical Terceira. With its sheltered natural harbour and modern marina, the town was named after the Battle of Praia Bay when the Miguelists were defeated on the beach by

Portuguese loyalist troops in 1829.

There should be a shuttle laid on to get you into town.

To be honest there is not a lot here. Mainly visited by surfers due to its windy conditions

Suggestions

Wander the cobbled streets for a closer look at the colourful, adorned Holy-Ghost temples, such as the blue and white Império dos Pescadores; stretch out on the beach; or hike along the fort stone walls rising to the untamed beauty of the volcanic mountains beyond. Don't miss the panoramic views across the bay from the belvedere at Ponta da Má Merenda, where the Forte do Espírito Santo once dominated the skyline.

Praia dos Biscoitos; Simply a beautiful spot on the island to relax. There are several levels that you can explore or just pick a spot and watch the waves come crashing in. The water in the natural pools is incredibly clear.

CARIBBEAN

Most if not all the island have minibuses touting tours at the port - cheaper and just as good as the ship tours. Most tours take only 2-3 hours so there is no worry about getting back to the ship before sail-away because the ship does not sail until either 5.30pm or 6pm

All islands will accept US\$ but experience shows use low value notes as the locals won't be happy if you pay for a 2 dollar drink with a US\$50 note. Even think about taking some EC\$ with you.

Warning, before you part with your money ask is the price EC\$ or US\$, there is a big difference.

Greater Antilles: Cayman Islands, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, Puerto Rico

Leeward Islands: Anguilla, Antigua, British Virgin Islands, Guadeloupe, Montserrat, Saba, St Barthelemy, St Maarten, St Eustatius, St Kitts & Nevis, US Virgin Islands

Windward Islands: Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Martinique, St Lucia, St Vincent & Grenadines, Trinidad & Tobago,

ABC Islands: Aruba, Bonaire, Curacao

Lucayan Archipelago: The Bahamas, Turks & Caicos

The majority of the cruises begin at Barbados, so we will start here. Then it is alphabetical.

Barbados



Watching the Atlantic surf crash down on the rugged east coast of this richly diverse island and, for a moment, you may feel you could be on the Cornish coast but the moment you hear the waves of gospel singing emanating from a tiny local church you realise you could not be anywhere else but Barbados.

While, over on the sheltered west coast, the glorious beaches are pure Caribbean. And there are more beaches and a lot more bars, cafés, restaurants and clubs creating a

vibrant 24/7 lifestyle on the south coast, too.

In the capital and cruise port, Bridgetown, there are intriguing signs of its British colonial past while, across the island, you are really spoilt for choice. You can enjoy every water sport under the sun; stunning nature walks and bike rides; or maybe a trip to the uniquely magnificent Harrison's Cave underground complex of caverns, waterfalls, stalactites and stalagmites.

Cruise ships sail straight into the capital - Bridgetown. This is where you normally start or end your cruise holiday with most cruise lines.

Bridgetown is good for a walk around. But it does have mixed reviews some have found it warm, welcoming place with some attractive buildings but others say it is dirty and not very impressive.

Suggestions

The dock area has an excellent duty-free shopping area, the best for price and selection of any of the islands. If you are planning a take-home duty-free bottle or a major jewellery purchase then this is the place to buy it.

Cruise Destinations

The ship is located some distance from the city; you will need to get a taxi or mini-bus into town. The mini-bus cost 1 USD pp one-way and a taxi about 3 USD. Taxi fares are regulated by the Barbados Government and are pre-set to where your final destination will be, meaning all the Taxis should quote you the same fare. Remember to always agree taxi fares beforehand.

Have you thought about hiring a car, especially if you are there for 2 days. It's cheap, much cheaper than a taxi, and easy to get around the island and you can choose where to go and how long to stay. The East coast is spectacular but not for swimming.

If you are looking at local buses then this may help.

Buses: Yellow buses are privately owned the sooner they fill the buses up the more money they get. They will stop at all bus stops around the island. The blue buses are government owned. The cost on both is US\$1 or 2 Barbados\$, it is the same fare for however many stops you go. There are no return tickets. The yellow ones play loud reggae music and is an experience! Not recommended if you suffer with back problems as the seats are quite hard, but good fun.

Harrison caves are worth the trip. It is easy to do DIY - most of the trip through the caves is by electric train, and the 'mites & 'tites are fantastic!

Atlantis submarine. It is air-conditioned and operates at sea-level air pressure - so your ears don't "pop". If you have accessibility issues then you need to be able to step from a boat onto sub then go down 12 steps down to the seating area so both hands needed to hold on to rails. It is a little cramped inside but once settled it ok.

For a DIY then hire a bus for a tour of the Island, \$35pp, 2016 and based on 6 people, for 3 - 4 hours, you go to the north of the Island, Animal Fruit Cave and beaches with wonderful waves. The whole tour was very beautiful and interesting and worth doing.

If you like gardens, there is one on Barbados called Hunte's Garden which is well worth a visit. It is easily reached by taxi.

Sunbury Plantation House is about 20 minutes' drive from Bridgetown. It was built in the 1600s and is now owned by the Barbadian National Trust, so is well maintained. It's a museum that's kept as it was lived in, and guides tell you all about the place. In one room there are unexpected collections of cameras and ophthalmic instruments dating back 100 years or so, and there are also a number of carriages on display in the cellars.

For something different, how about 'The Concorde Experience' is sited by the Airport.

If you are in to Golf then, for £115, a trip to the local golf course. This includes transport, golf buggy, club hire, green fees and a beer, great value.

Tour Operators

For a local tour operator: EL Tigre

The "Swimming with Turtles" trip in the sea off Barbados is good value, with free rum punch (but only after you finished swimming). P&O use Tiami Catamaran Cruises. However, they have their own website and facebook page.

Excursions

'The Best of Barbados' The tour is about four hours long, stopping at the Sunbury Plantation House which is now a museum run by the Barbadian National Trust. Next you are taken to Orchid World: The final stop is the Gun Hill Signal Station, which is in the middle of the island at its highest point, with some fabulous views right across Barbados.

Cruise Destinations

If you are flying out from here back to the UK and want something to do during the day of departure then the Farewell to Barbados Crane resort tour is worthwhile, you will see parts of Barbados you have never seen before and Bathsheba and Crane Resort are breath-taking. You get photo stops and a yummy lunch. The cost is £35pp (2016)

Beaches:

You can get a taxi to Malibu on Brighton Beach, it is about 10 mins from the ship. There are beds and a bit of shade on the beach it is an absolutely beautiful beach.

You can just walk into Bridgetown then out the other side onto Carlisle Bay or you can take a short taxi ride, 3-5 mins depending on traffic and should cost about US\$5.00 one-way

The Boatyard is a private beach area and is located on beautiful Carlisle Bay. It is open from 9:00 am - 10 pm and there is a Beach Package which must be paid to be allowed entry onto their premises. It offers ocean trampoline, iceberg climb and slide, dive platform, rope swing and beach volleyball and there is a swim with the turtle's tour available on select days. The package in 2016 US\$20pp entry. This gets you a bed, broly, chair, welcome cocktail, free shots at the bar, free boat trip to swim with turtles & free shuttle back to the ship sand is like talcum powder. This is the same beach that P&O take you to for around £25pp (2015) and they include a 'mini tour' which basically means you drive past Carlisle beach up the road and then come back to the beach.

There is also Paynes Bay where you can swim out and snorkel with the turtles.

Lobsters Alive, just down from the Boatyard on Carlisle Bay, and a little quieter. \$20 two sunbeds a parasol and half price drinks. (2016)

Dover beach. Cost \$10pp single. Beach is lovely but sunbeds are tatty and no real rest room.

Harbour Lights is close to the ship, \$5 taxi pp, free wifi. Ring them up and reserve a pair of front line sun beds with parasol. They do a very nice bucket of iced beers. They do food too, we had one of their chicken rotis which was delicious but they might only do that on Wednesdays. There are lots of trips on the beach, swimming with Turtles, Snorkelling and lots more.

Aruba



Talcum-soft beaches, world class shopping, glitzy casinos, stunning sea views and tracts of desert landscape scattered with giant boulders and exotic cacti are all yours to enjoy when you visit popular Aruba, jewel of the 'deep' Caribbean.

And you will find most of these attractions without straying far from the capital and cruise port, Oranjestad, a waterfront city endowed with a cosmopolitan population - of Portuguese, Spanish, Venezuelan, Indian, Pakistani and African as well as Dutch origin.

Your ship will normally dock in Oranjestad.

A member of the Dutch Antilles so has lovely brightly painted houses. A very nice clean town where you dock and it nice to have a pleasant walk round the harbour. There is some good duty free shopping to be done in the shops. The shopping mall is right by the ship.

This cultural mix makes Oranjestad heaven for adventurous foodies and a great place to 'shop the world' as you can pick up Delft china, Dutch cheese, Danish silverware and Madeiran embroidery at low prices.

Suggestions

For local colour, visit Schooner Harbour, which is crammed with brightly painted boats and craft stalls, and Willemstad, famed for its 16th century Dutch houses.

Be aware!!! - Back in town, if you go for a drink in a bar upstairs in the pink buildings (Iguana Joes) there is a drink on the menu called Grannys Pink Lemonade - innocent enough you might think. WRONG!!! It arrives in a half Carafe and was made with Rum and Vodka - OMG it is delicious but somehow your legs won't work and you talk funny!!

Cruise Destinations

Walk around Wilhemina Park, The semi sub gives a lasting memory.

Tour Operator

For a local tour operator Sonny Binns Tour, e-mail: binns.tours@yahoo.com, web site:

<http://www.sonnytoursaruba.com/>. If you e-mail him he is very prompt with his response, giving you all the information you needed. The Island Tour requires a minimum of 6 people costs US\$30 and last 3 hrs. You visit the Lighthouse, Alto Vista Chapel, Natural Bridge and the Rock Formations to name a few. Again, arrange prior to your cruise.

Beaches:

The bus station in Aruba is almost opposite the port exit, just slightly to the right; ask at the bus station for the bus which takes you to the hotel zone, this is the same bus which the US cruisers use to get to the beaches. For \$2.30 return bus-fare, plus \$5 dollars for a lounge you can have a day on beautiful Palm Beach. BTW, P&O charges £29 for a similar beach break.

Catch the local bus to Eagle beach only US\$5 return, if you buy at rge kiosk or US\$2.60 single on the bus or by taxi US\$5 each way. Sunbeds were US\$45 for 2. Some say, only soft drinks, no beer on sale other have said beers were expensive at \$6 dollars each. So take your pick. All prices are 2016. It has miles of soft white sand but beware! The water looks inviting but is very dangerous with short rolling breakers smashing the last 5 metres before the beach and can catch out the unaware.

The day at De Palm Island off Aruba is great, and good value - it is a man made fun island about 6 minutes by boat, and once there, it's all- inclusive. Tickets are available at Port de Palm. Adult Full Day USD\$109, Adult Half Day USD\$99.

Take the bus to California beach for snorkelling it is at the end of route (\$2-40). The journey takes about 30 minutes passing low rise condos, retail malls, Palm Beach and big company high rise resorts. From drop of point you walk along beach (which has no facilities) to where the catamarans moor. These will take you out into the bay.

And water babies will love Eagle Beach, Palm Beach and Baby Beach, all a short distance from the port.

Now you may have heard about the Flamingos on one of the beaches on Aruba. As far as I know they are only on the Renaissance Island, which belongs to the Renaissance Hotel. If you are not staying at the Renaissance Marina Resort or Renaissance Ocean Suites and you decide to go then you can purchase a day pass at the front desk of the hotel, a little research show that in 2016 it was \$99pp. The price includes towels and comfortable beach chairs lunch and a (one) drink on the island. Truthfully not worth it just to see the flamingos.

Cruise Destinations

Antigua



With over 365 beaches, there is a slice of white sand heaven for every day of the year - even a leap year - on the idyllic Caribbean holiday island Antigua, which played host to Admiral Horatio Nelson's fleet in the late 1700's. Nelson's Dockyard now bustles with crew and passengers from yachts and cruise ships sailing these waters for pleasure rather than for King and Country.

The main port, St John's, is also the capital and a vibrant hub for shopping as well as being within easy range of some of the best beaches - at Fort James, Deep Bay, Galley Bay and Hawksbill. Almost perfect weather conditions and low humidity, due to the warm prevailing trade winds, allows Antigua to boast of being the sunniest of the Eastern Caribbean islands with the lowest annual rainfall. It is also the largest of the English-speaking Leeward Islands although it is only 14 miles long and 11 miles wide. Still, with a population of less than 70,000, this means there are lots of wide open spaces - especially on those gorgeous beaches.

Cruise ships sail straight into the capital - St John's.

In bright blue sky and warm sun, Antigua looks lovely. Some good shopping to be done (diamonds and cosmetics etc) by where you dock.

Suggestions

St. John's is a lively hub for shopping and dining. On the downside the taxi drivers, hair braiders etc around the terminal constantly pester you.

The skyline of St. John's, the capital and largest city of Antigua and Barbuda, is dominated by the magnificently evocative white baroque towers of St. John's Cathedral, built in 1845. The towers are the first sight of Antigua for about half of the island's visitors each year, many of whom arrive by boat.

Museum of Antigua and Barbuda: This charming museum tells the story of Antigua and Barbuda from its geological birth through the present day. Visit their website at: www.antiguamuseums.org

On Friday and Saturday mornings, be sure to visit the vibrant farmers market on the southern edge of the city. Folk crafts, colourful tropical fruits, and a buzzing crowd make for a lively morning.

If you really want to DIY then Buses run fairly frequently on weekdays and Saturdays from early morning till around 6pm but on Sundays there are very few buses, if any at all. The buses don't run to a timetable, but they leave when they are full, or when the driver decides! To get to the West Bus station from the dock, you walk straight up the road beyond the ship gates till you come to Market Street where you turn right. Then it's a short walk and you'll come to a fork in the road where you bear right (by the statue) in front of the public marketplace. Just after that, you'll come to the bus station on the right. The walk probably takes about 10 minutes.

Here are a few routes for you to check out:

Buses 15 & 17 are available until midnight

Bus 15 from St. John's to All Saints road & Liberta Cost EC \$2.50

Bus 17 from St. John's to Falmouth Harbour, Cobbs Cross & English Harbour Cost EC 3.25

Bus 22 from St. John's to Crabb Hill, Johnston's Point, Urlings and Old Road Cost EC \$3.25

Bus 20 Golden Grove, Antigua State College, Creek side, Ebenezer Jennings and Bolans for those going to Jolly Harbour Cost EC \$3.00

Cruise Destinations

Most people don't know that the admittance fee to Nelson's Dockyard includes Shirley Heights, in 2013 this was USD\$8pp. So keep the ticket.

The island is small enough that you could do a circular coastal route - which would capture the magnificent beaches - the rain forest, the black pineapple plantations, Betty's Hope and the old sugar plantations.

If you love cricket then the "Cricketing Legends" tour, is a must. You visit Sir Vivian Richards Cricket Ground and a lot more as well.

For something different then hire a car for the day in Antigua. Although he had a set route in mind we just did our thing and he waited.. One of my highlights.

For Free Wifi try the Kings Casino. Go through Casino to lounge/bar at back left side. Air conditioned and you can buy a drink if you want but there is no need to buy anything or participate.

Tour Operators

For a local tour operator: Antigua Premier <http://www.antiguapremiertours.com/index.html>

Their North Tour visits, Betty's Hope Sugar Plantation, Devils Bridge, Nelson's Dockyard*, Shirley's Heights. Duration: Approx. 2.5 hours. USD\$140 for 1-4, 4+ USD\$35pp (2015)

Their "Tropical Trails" costs USD\$70pp for a Land Rover of 8 person, (2015)s. You are taken through the sugar cane and rain forest over very rough roads (pot holes you could get lost in) and then a run round some of the island sights.

We did his North Tour as a private tour for 2. Well worth the money. After a tour of the town we visited, Betty's Hope Sugar Plantation, Devils Bridge, Long Bay Beach- stopped for a drink and a toe dip, wish we had brought our costumes. Nelson's Dockyard and Shirley Heights. The trip should have been for 2 ½ hrs but in fact lasted 3 ½ hrs. His commentary was excellent and he really looked after us.

There is also Lawrence of Antigua, lawrenceofantigua@gmail.com

His Tour of Island and beach, \$50pp, 2016, Includes; English Harbour, Nelsons Dockyard, Shirley Heights- EXTRA \$8 entrance fee, and then onto Valley Church beach for short time. There is a restaurant, beach chairs, umbrellas and other facilities on the beach but cruisers are not really impressed with this one. There are much nicer beaches to be found.

If you make your way up to Heritage Quay and arrange a taxi, rates are fixed or they should be.

A typical tour is a journey to Nelsons dockyard, Shirley's heights and a look at Eric Clapton's house and back to town for \$20 each. This takes around 2 1/2 hours and in a lovely clean air conditioned mini bus. Your driver will point out many places of interest and tell you quite a bit about the island. In 2016 an island tour cost \$100 for the day and the passengers gave a \$30 tip. They said it was a wonderful day finished at a gorgeous and fairly secluded little beach. What more could you ask for.

Try Lenroy Abraham, he is a member of P&O Cruising in the Caribbean Facebook group. He's a fab guide in Antigua and will take you around the island to Nelsons Dock yards etc and onto church valley beach. Highly recommended by many cruisers. Web page: <http://beachislandtours.com/>

Try the xtreme circumnav with www.adventureantigua.com.

An action packed day Miami vice style in a speedboat going round the whole of the island. It cost \$140, (2016) but included stingray city with snorkelling, visiting Nelsons Dockyard, lunch on a deserted beach, snorkelling at the Pillars of Hercules and a beach stop for rum punch. The boat holds a maximum of 20 people and the tour includes snorkelling equipment.

Otherwise get off the ship and be plenty taxis etc waiting so much clearer than any ships excursions.

Cruise Destinations

Excursions

The helicopter tour (Montserrat) is fantastic and really is value for money.

There is also an Antigua by helicopter excursion. Expensive but worth every penny. You go around the entire island and see all 360 ish beaches.

The P&O Segway tour is £63pp, for 3 hours. Good fun.

Beaches:

It has 365 beaches so take your pick, they are all beautiful. Be careful, the beaches shelve rapidly so you must be a confident (or reasonably confident) swimmer.

Valley Church Beach is beautiful. offers everything including free wifi. It is about 20 mins drive from the port. \$8pp each way in taxi, sunbeds \$5 each, broly \$10 Well organised. Agree a pick up time with the taxi driver and Nick from the beach will come and tell you when the taxi returns to save you waiting in the sun.

Take a local taxi to Dickinsons Bay, less than 10 mins away. It does get very busy and although the sunbeds are reasonable at \$5 pp, it costs \$12 for the parasol.

Jolly beach is beautiful only a 20 minute taxi ride but well worth it

Runaway Bay is \$50 for 7 seater (2016)

Bequia



Bequia is the second largest island in the Grenadines at 7 square miles. It is part of the country of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Bequia (pronounced bekway), is a green and hilly S-shaped outpost of the Grenadines, nine miles south of St Vincent. Some say it is almost perfect.

Deep-set Admiralty Bay is one of the Caribbean's most protected natural harbours. It's surrounded by steep verdant hills, always full of yachts. At the back of the bay lies Port Elizabeth, Bequia's village capital, with colourful

wooden buildings, chickens strutting on the wall outside the Anglican Georgian church and a good bookshop. A scenic waterside path, the Belmont Walkway, runs past a string of bars and restaurants.

Suggestions

Hamilton Fort; Hamilton Fort is one of the best spots on Bequia to view the entire harbour and the Belmont walkway including Belmont beach, Princess Margaret beach and Lower bay. But, getting there is a bit challenging, even by taxi.

Port Elizabeth; If you want to go off the beaten path this place is it. The restaurants were the best part with very good food. However, in the summer be prepared to battle mosquitoes.

Beaches

Princess Margaret Beach; Long white sand beach. It has a nice beach café at the far end so you can grab a lovely lunch and cool drink.

Lower Bay Beach; This beach is frequently visited by both locals and foreign visitors. Soft white sand, calm blue waters that will make to swim/soak for hours. On the other side there are food huts and drink bars to satisfy you in every way.

Bonaire



The least developed of the Caribbean ABC islands (Aruba and Curacao are the others), Bonaire has many good reasons to protect its own extraordinary environment.

Bonaire's Marine Park, which covers the coral reefs along the island's west coast, has a vast number and variety of fish, and snorkelling and diving amongst these colourful residents is a sheer delight. A more conventional national park spreads across the whole northern part of the island.

Originally plantations, this freshwater swampland is now home to pelican, parrots and geese. Pick of the island's beaches is called Pink Beach because of the attractive colour the coral has turned the sand.

Suggestion

Your ship will normally dock in Kralendijk. Lovely clean place with a nice prom (crystal clear water with loads of parrot fish) bars selling Amstel beer, souvenir and clothes shops on the street parallel to the prom. Do be careful when walking on unmade pavements.

Bonaire town is but a few yards from the quayside and much like its Dutch influenced neighbour Curacao. The buildings are brightly pastel coloured although the architecture is very much more simple Caribbean style.

There is a small market and craft stalls set up on the quayside

In the afternoon, there is a small market and craft stalls set up on the quayside.

Beaches:

There are few sandy beaches, while the surrounding reefs are easily accessible from the shore and make the island ideal for scuba divers and snorkelers.

There was a little island called Klein Bonaire, where the snorkelling is very good

If you are looking for a guided snorkel trip. Renee snorkel trips and Woodwind are two options. Renee takes you along the mainland and Woodwind sail to Klein Bonaire.

Souribon has plenty of loungers and shades. Beach bar is good.

It is possible to swim quite close to where the ship docks, however the beach is quite rocky.

Curacao



The largest island in the Dutch Antilles, Curacao is home to more than 50 nationalities so has a cosmopolitan atmosphere. Its lovely capital and cruise port, Willemstad, is full of 17th, 18th and 19th century Dutch and Spanish Colonial architecture.

Part of the Dutch Antilles although not as nice as Aruba. As soon as you step ashore you entered a newish looking shopping/café area which gives an immediate impression of an air of quality with its immaculately pastel painted

buildings. Shops are quite expensive by the looks of it. Some nice market stalls and the nice shopping mall that you have to walk back through to get back to the ship.

You Berth at the cruise terminal and it's a fair walk into town. However, at this point there are three ways to cross the water, ferry boat or the amazing pontoon floating Swing Bridge, both pedestrian only and free of charge, or a 200 foot high road bridge for the traffic.

Cruise Destinations

There is free wifi just on the dockside if docked by the swing bridge and excellent curacao city free wifi in the main shopping street Breedestraat which can be used just sitting on a bench in the sun.

The two sides of the city are divided by Santa Anna Bay, a narrow channel flanked by pastel-tinted, gabled houses and spanned by the spectacular swing-aside Queen Emma pontoon bridge.

On one side you will find the 18th century Fort Amsterdam and Breederstraat, gateway to Willemstad's main shopping and restaurant district where you can buy everything from Delft pottery to Italian silk ties, Japanese electrical goods, Indonesian batik clothing, locally-made black coral jewellery and, of course, the sapphire-blue liqueur to which Curacao has given its name.

Suggestions

Willemstad is one very attractive town. Dutch inspired architecture, pastel painted waterfront buildings. Everywhere you look the buildings old and new complement each other with their pastel painted facades. Lots of colourful Dutch-style houses. A walk across the quirky swing bridge named the Queen Elizabeth, across the harbour by the floating market and to a nice shopping area and lovely café-bars along the waterfront.

There is a little Trolley Train, not expensive. It takes you past the floating market, "wedding cake" house, the cathedral, park & the Arches. It is worth a visit to the Floating Market, lined with boats from Colombia, Venezuela and other Caribbean islands selling colourful local produce and handicrafts.

For a place for a drink and meal try the Copacabana Cafe in a little square, have a couple of beers and enjoy the Teriyaki Chicken the special of the day \$8.50.

The Rif Fort next to the port was quite nice with nice bars etc

The nearby Sea Aquarium and Hato caves along with the Maritime Museum are worth checking out.

The open sided bus for a tour of the island is good - \$20pp with a free bar and, more importantly FREE WIFI!! Very good tour which lasts over 2hrs and they dropped you off near the ferry to cross over to the town.

Tour Operators

For a local tour operator: Irie Tours. They have a tour, stop at the Curacao distillery, and an hour or so at the beach admission price included all for \$20 (also beer and soft drinks!). <http://irietours.com/>

Beaches:

The beaches here are of black volcanic sand.

The beach close to the Sea Aquarium is a nice sandy beach and quite close to Willemstad.

Take a local mini bus to Mamba Beach \$5 pp each way, entrance to the beach cost \$3 each and sunbeds were another \$5 each. It is a lovely beach and kept very clean and tidy, various bars serving rum punch etc.

However, on a Saturday the beach gets very busy.

Dominica



This lush island is right on the whales Caribbean migration path so be sure you take a boat trip out to spot them on their way north. And, even if you do not see whales, there are plenty of playful dolphins that usually tag along in the boats wake.

But, by passing Dominica by, the whales do not know what they are missing. It is an island of breath-taking natural beauty with crater lakes and waterfalls, forests and gorges, many with evocative names like Boiling Lake and Valley of

Desolation.

Offshore, there are coral reefs teeming with fish of all colours, shapes and sizes to amaze swimmers, snorkellers and scuba divers. You are also welcome to visit the last surviving community of Carib Indians, the original inhabitants of the entire Caribbean, who still follow the old ways - fishing, carving and basket-making.

Suggestions

You dock straight into the capital Roseau a relaxed place with a great atmosphere ideal for cruise passengers as you can simply step of your ship and head to the surrounding shops, wander round the market and just enjoy it. The great thing about shopping in Dominica is that it is duty free; however shopping is not as prominent in Dominica as it is on other Caribbean Islands. As you walk off the short jetty you are in the main streets. There you are bombarded with an army of taxi-man private tour operators.

For dining, you are not going to get Ramsay's Michelin Star treatment here, just good honest simple local fare.

Old Market Plaza - one of the easiest places to pick up souvenirs, located just behind the Dominica Museum, in Roseau. Slaves where once sold here but know you will find handcrafted jewellery, T-shirts, spices, souvenirs, batik and lacquered and woven bamboo boxes.

Botanical Gardens - The 40-acre Botanical Gardens, founded in 1891 are the largest area of green space within the City of Roseau. It is a great place to relax, stroll, or watch a cricket match or simply view over 50 types of indigenous plants and imported trees as well as the Sisserou Parrot, the National Bird of Dominica. Be warned it is a 10 minute stroll away, but it is all uphill to the gates and all uphill when you get in there.

This is definitely a place to take a local tour so that you get to see the rain forest, learn about the plants and animals, taste the fruits, see sulphur springs, impressive waterfalls and fabulous views.

Emerald Pool - Quite possibly the most visited nature attractions on the island, this emerald green pool fed by a 50-foot waterfall is an easy trip to make.

An easy 30-minute hike takes you through magnificent overhanging trees and lush vegetation to the shimmering pool, which appears green in the tree-filtered sunlight. If you go for a dip, you can swim right up to the waterfall!

On your way back there are two viewpoints where you can see the Atlantic Coast and Morne Laurent to your left, rising to an elevation of 2,248 ft. Breath-taking!

Cruise Destinations

Morne Trois Pitons National Park – A UNESCO World Heritage Site, this 17,000-acre swath of lush, mountainous land in the south-central interior (covering 9% of Dominica) is the island's crown jewel. The Park is named after its highest mountain, Morne Trois Pitons, meaning mountain of three peaks. Undisputedly the highlight of the park is the Boiling Lake. Reputedly the World's largest such lake. The two to four hour (one way) hike up to the lake is challenging so ensure you are wearing the appropriate attire for a strenuous hike, and a guide is a must. During your hike you will come across a number of waterfalls including Sari Sari Waterfalls the sight of water cascading 150 feet into a large pool is worth the 45 minute hike. In fact the falls are so large that you can feel the spray from hundreds of yards away.

Tour Operators

For a local tour operator: Bumpiiing Tours.

Lennox Cadette has been recommended. He is a member of P&O Cruising in the Caribbean Facebook group.

Excursions

The Aerial Tram in the rain forest here is good.

Try the P&O "Whale & Dolphin watching trip" fabulous trip, great crew on the boat, If you do get to see the whales they will be close to the boat Totally recommend - best £55pp spent.

Try the P&O Carib Indians tour, this is very good, includes a delicious vegetarian lunch. Botanic gardens, rainforests, sea views etc

Beaches:

It is not an island for beaches, but does have good snorkelling on the reefs especially "Champagne Reef". Taxi is about \$20 return and \$2pp to enter.

Grand Cayman



One of the Caribbean's most affluent and laid-back islands, Grand Cayman makes a perfect cruise call. Tenders take passengers straight to the capital, George Town, which is easily explored on foot.

Get a taste of the island's history at Fort George, which dates from 1790 or plunge 100 feet beneath the waves to view Dayglo-coloured fish, spectacular underwater mountains and elaborate coral formations through the big windows of a submarine.

Grand Cayman is a pleasant enough destination, however some cruisers think it feels very touristy and lacks the charm and character of other Caribbean Islands.

Suggestions

The overwhelming majority of cruise passengers do not research George Town tours or excursions or any part of the Cayman Islands prior to landing so they end up taking the most costly and crowded Cayman Islands tours booked through the ship

Touring Georgetown and George Town sightseeing are tours that you can easily do yourself—even without a vehicle. A taxi ride into George Town to tour around on your own will cost far less than any guided tour of George Town, while providing the freedom of visiting the Georgetown sites and attractions you prefer at your own pace.

Cruise Destinations

The sightseeing and shopping area of *George Town* is less than two square miles so walking is obviously the most practical and cost effective manner of touring *George Town*.

Cayman's Seaman's Monument is located directly on the waterfront near *Fort Street*, in *George Town*. The *Seaman's Monument* and what little remains of *Fort George* both provide fine photographic opportunities into *Grand Cayman's* sea heritage past.

Grand Cayman's National Museum in *George Town* displays a broad array of artifacts; indeed, the building itself is an artefact as it is the oldest standing building in *George Town*.

Other *George Town* Top Tours and Attractions Include: • *George Town Snorkeling*, *Cali Shipwreck Snorkel Tour* is FREE, *Cayman Islands National Museum*

How about a taxi to *Hell* and back, just to say you have done that. Afterwards a visit to the 7 mile beach where you can get even closer to the marine life snorkelling around *Stingray City* or meeting the inhabitants of *Turtle Farm* near the pretty town of *Hell*, a short drive away from *Georgetown* and a popular place from which to send postcards.

Meet the inhabitants of *Turtle Farm* near the pretty town of *Hell*, a short drive away from *Georgetown* and a popular place from which to send postcards.

Can I suggest that you look here: <http://www.caymanactivityguide.com/LandTourGeorgeTown.htm> It has maps and other recommendations.

But before your ship leaves, make time to browse *George Town's* bustling *Craft Market* and offbeat boutiques. Look out for *Caymanite*, a brownish-pink semiprecious stone unique to the islands.

Beach

If you just want a beach, there will be plenty of waiting taxis and mini buses offering trips to *Seven Mile beach* at US\$4pp, 2016. This is mainly a beach resort where you pay a cover charge of around \$5 - \$10 to get in then \$10 for sun beds and \$15 for an umbrella or even \$100 for a cabana, includes sun loungers, table and chairs in the shade, waiter service in a private roped off area. Prices are 2016.

Grand Turk



Bursting with turn-of-the-century Caribbean charm, *Grand Turk*, the historic capital of the *Turks and Caicos* is best known for its sugary white shores, calm blue waters and rustic colonial charm. And at just six miles long, and just over a mile wide this small but perfectly formed island is easy to explore.

On your walk round *Cockburn*, *Grand Turk's* main town, take a turn down *Duke and Font Street* which are lined with 18th and 19th century landmarks which reflect the Bermudian

architecture of the salt era. The nearby *Turks and Caicos Museum* discloses the rich cultural and natural diversity of the islands and tells the story of the *Molasses Reef Wreck*, the oldest European shipwreck discovered in the western hemisphere.

The surrounding seas offer a variety of dramatic and colourful underwater landscapes and snorkelers and scuba-divers will be spoilt for choice. From the seahorses and stingrays of *Coral Garden Reef* and *Columbus Landfall National Park* to the curves of *McDonalds Arch* and cliffs of the beautiful *Black Forest*.

Cruise Destinations

Don't stray from the facilities around the cruise terminal and Mall (not a safety issue - just nothing else to see).

Beaches:

Ship docks right near the beach the sunbeds with the Green Colombian Emeralds Umbrellas are free all, the sunbeds with other colour umbrellas you have to pay for.

If you get fed up of that go into Jimmy Buffets Margaritaville have a cocktail and just enjoy the fun. Margaritaville is a good choice if your cruise stops in Grand Turk if you feel the need to use the pool instead of the beach nearby. Biggest perk is the swim up bar! Food and drinks is standard Margaritaville fair and decently priced.

Grenada



Sailors through the centuries have rated it one of the worlds prettiest harbours and it is hard to disagree. Horseshoe-shaped and set in a volcanic crater, Grenadas capital and cruise port St Georges is flanked by two forts, with colourful French colonial style buildings ranged along the front.

It is the perfect entrance to one of the Caribbeans most scenic islands. Only 12 miles by 21, it is awash with waterfalls, mountain valleys, rainforests, lakes and volcanic

craters. The beaches are to die for, especially Grand Anse - a two-mile stretch of pure white sand just around the bay from St Georges.

Grenada is also the island you can smell before you can see it. The 'Spice Island' grows more spices per square mile than anywhere else on the planet with nutmeg its signature seasoning.

In fact, gentle haggling with spice vendors is part of the fun of cruising to this laid-back Caribbean island.

Many people say Grenada was their favourite island. It is a very green island & there are nature type things to see. Grenada is known as the spice island of the Caribbean.

Grenada had been badly damaged as a result of Hurricane Ivan in 2004, therefore a lot of the buildings are newly build, there are still a few original buildings around and the fort and churches are still standing well.

Suggestions

Just exploring the Capital, St Georges, was fun it is a pretty little town but not as easy to see from the new berth. We walked up the hill to the Fort, down the other side to the harbour and then back through the scary road tunnel before walking around the amazing spice market.

The Spice market in Grenada is in walking distance of the port instead of paying a lot through organised tours The Island discovery that takes in the waterfalls.

There is a little land train \$20 pp for a trip around the town.

Tour Operators

For a local tour guide, highly recommended, Martin 'CatEye' cateye@spiceisle.co

Booking prior to your cruise you can choose where to go, Fort Frederick, Annendale Falls, Grand Etang lake and you finish up at a lovely beach - there was a very lively bar where you are able to eat and drink. All in all a great day out and all for \$30pp, 2016, for 14 people in 2 very comfortable vans.

Cruise Destinations

Excursions

The P&O 'Island drive and Annandale Falls £38pp, 2016, 4 1/2 hours, is very good and worth the money.

There is a Lobster and Champagne excursion, where you can snorkel to where the undersea sculptures are. Cruisers who have done this highly recommend it. £83pp (2016)

Beaches:

Get a cheap water taxi from just outside the cruise terminal across a short stretch of water and onto Grand Anse beach, US\$10 rtn. The water taxi's run all day every 15 minutes or so.

A lovely wide and long stretch of beach which is equipped with sunbeds and umbrellas, hut type restaurants and bars. Grand Anse beach is huge so if you are looking for a quiet spot don't take the first sun beds offered walk further along the beach. There is a market area where souvenirs, cold drinks, food and toilets are available. The inflatable rides, pulled by speedboats is an experience! US\$20 for 3 people.

Mourne Rouge a lot quieter than Grand Anse, plenty of shade from the trees at the back of the beach.

Guadeloupe



Idyllically situated at the junction of Guadeloupe's two main islands Basse-Terre and Grande Terre. Head for the suburb of Le Gosier for Guadeloupe's main seaside resort and explore pretty streets where colonial and modern buildings square up to one another. Stroll through beautiful and abundant tree-lined parks and head for the market square to browse local wares. Navigating the narrow streets is quite a task by day, while by night the bustle transfers to the Place de la Victoire central square. This pretty park, shaded by palms also features sandbox trees thought to have been

planted by notorious 18th century politician Victor Hugues.

Guadeloupe's French roots resonate in its commerce - stock up on luxurious French imported perfumes and other products from many of Pointe-à-Pitre's little 'Rues'. The harbour-front Centre Saint-John Perse offers speciality shops and restaurants, transforming old warehouses and cruise-terminal buildings into a glossy complex in contemporary French Caribbean style.

There are local tour companies available, but people have said that these seem very expensive and chaotic.

The Euros is much more acceptable here than dollars so stock up.

Better known for: Where the BBC series, 'Death in Paradise' is filmed.

When you get off the ship there is a tourist info booth with city and island maps.

Suggestions

Let us cover 'Death in Paradise' first. The location is on the far side of the island and those that have visited, either DIY or on ships excursion have said it is not worth it. Whilst others, who have been on the same excursion said, it was fantastic and that the island is absolutely beautiful. So, you pay your money etc. P&O tour cost £38pp, but includes a visit to the gardens, see below. The taxi drivers ask about US€50pp, =€200.

Visit the lovely Le Jardin Botanique de Deshaies. As you walk through the gardens you'll catch sight of the vibrant colours of the hibiscus, bougainvillea and orchid collections. Listen out for the birds in the aviary and visit the pond to see the flamingos nestled amongst the water lilies.

Cruise Destinations

Parc Des Mamelles, located in the rainforest of Guadeloupe National Park. It was originally a natural reserve for raccoons and today it is home to a selection of species of animal that inhabit the Caribbean and Latin America.

Your path through the forest is on a suspended walkway 50 feet above the forest floor. See a variety of plants, trees and flowers before experiencing a breathtaking view of the Cousteau Marine Reserve and Pigeon Island. If you prefer to keep your feet on the ground, you can enjoy the sights from a marked walkway passing by the fascinating Insectarium.

Place de la Victoire is a large park dotted with mango trees and royal palms, Place de la Victoire, is the focal point of Pointe-à-Pitre. Visitors can relax at the sidewalk cafes lining the Rue Bébion on the west side of the park and stroll past the charming old homes along the Rue de Comdt Mortenal on the east side.

The colourful and bustling markets of Pointe-à-Pitre exude all the culture and colour of this vibrant town. Tropical fruits, fragrant spices, local crafts, and brightly-hued flowers are a sensory feast at the harbour side market along La Darse, the inner harbour road. Fishing boats tie up here to sell their catch. Other markets around the town include Saint-Antoine, Saint-Jules, and the Flower market. Shopping hot spots include the Center Saint-John Perse, and the boutiques and jewellery shops of Frébault, Nozières and Schoelcher Streets. Shoppers will also find many smaller stores and stalls on the noisy, animated side streets.

The Aquarium de la Guadeloupe is rated among the best French aquariums; Aquarium de la Guadeloupe in Gossier showcases the region's rich marine life. The museum is about 11-minutes by car from Pointe-à-Pitre. More than 60 species of tropical fish, as well as sharks and turtles, are contained in numerous ponds. The snorkeling tours are popular with children and adults alike. Address: Place Creole, La Marina, Gosier 97190, Guadeloupe

Official site: <http://www.aquariumdelaguadeloupe.com/>

Excursions

The P&O tour to the rainforest is quite good. After a coach ride you have a short walk to a waterfall, then onto some lovely botanical gardens.

P&O 'Botanical Gardens and Death in Paradise' tour, cost £38pp. Visit to Botanical Gardens followed by the DiP village.

Beaches

People who went to Ste Anne were not impressed, no sunbeds or shades, you just throw your towel on beach. However, you can watch the Pelicans diving for fish around the small boats. There is a small beach cafe which near by. At the coach drop off point nice shopping and a bar with nice beer. The local bus from the station is €3pp single. Go to the tourist information booth and ask the lady to point out on a map where the station is it is about a 5-10 min walk. The bus says St Anne's in the front.

Isla Margarita



Order this Margarita on your Caribbean cruise, and you are guaranteed two for the price of one. Islands, that is, as what were two are now one - joined by a narrow sandbank.

The western half is delightfully unspoilt and undeveloped, with sandy, uncrowded beaches and intriguing coves to explore, while all the main sights are in the eastern half. Like the island's oldest settlement, Pampatar, which has a well-preserved 17th century fort at its heart, or the historic churches and lively waterfront market in the main town,

Spanish colonial-style Porlamar.

Just off the coast of South America and part of Venezuela, Margarita is a favourite holiday destination for Venezuelans who find it an oasis of calm and relaxation. And nowhere more so than on the Laguna de la Restinga National Park. Take a slow boat through the mangroves and see just how many exotic, multi-coloured birds you can spot in the trees.

Suggestions

Not an island to rush back to visit to be honest.

Take the tender to the island and have a mooch around the port area. There are lots of stalls and 2-3 bars selling reasonably priced drinks. Nice sized beach with sunbeds, there are 2-3 beds set aside for massages.

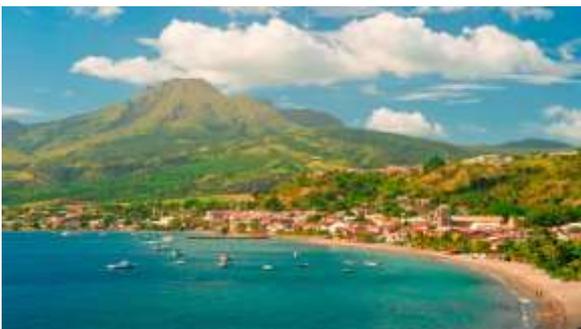
Excursions

"Rhumba on the Chiva". This is basically an island tour, a one hour stop at a nice beach and lots of free booze and snacks thrown in. It cost about £24 pp (= 40 USD pp) and was lots of good, enjoyable fun, but take out the alcohol induced fun element and it was just another island tour with the limitations of that, as explained above. It included the usual stop at a jewellery mall where the pearls etc were not a patch on that available back at the dock.

Beaches:

There is a beach where you dock although it can be quite busy as it's not very big.

Martinique



Martinique, one of the Lesser Antilles, is a chic, beautiful and beguiling island that offers a taste of France deep in the heart of the Caribbean. It also possesses endearing West Indian warmth in its personality and a special Caribbean spice in its music, dance and cuisine.

Martinique's capital, Fort-de-France, is a neat and colourful town that boasts a scaled down replica of Paris' Sacre Coeur, as well as a memorial to the island's most famous local daughter - Napoleon's 'Not tonight' empress - Josephine.

The island is dominated by Mount Pelee, an active volcano at the northern end of the island, which destroyed the city of St Pierre in 1902. There are black sand beaches and rainforests in the north, with more beautiful sands to the south.

It's very French! So don't forget to take Euros.

This place gets very mixed reviews, with a 70/30 split on stay on board.to good. If you are visiting here on a Sunday, then almost nothing is open.

Cruise Destinations

Not many tour operators/taxis offering trips.

Suggestions

Jardin de Balata (Botanical Gardens) Quite spacious, and has lovely plants, the price of €13pp (2015) seems a little high, but once inside I think you will find it is a fair price. There is an overhead series of suspended walkways (for those full of daring do). Lots of photo opportunities and little places to sit down. It's slippery in places so do take care when moving about. The best bits are the hummingbirds - at least 20 or 30 all drinking a sugary solution from special feeders near the entrance.

Catch a ferry from the seafront and cruise across the magnificent bay to a clutch of superb beaches. Or visit Mont Pelée to see the site of the worst ever volcanic eruption in the Caribbean - then cool off with local rum punch!

La Pagerie, birthplace of Napoleon's Empress Josephine, and Diamond Rock, a 600-foot pinnacle.

Beaches:

Take the water taxi to a lovely beach. €7pp for water taxi and US\$10pp for bed on beach. It is decent for both swimming and snorkelling.

Anse, taxi should cost around €7pp Rtn. Couleuvre and Les Salines Beach

Mayreau



Mayreau is lovely. This is a private island only about 1&1/2 miles long. The tenders drop you at Saline Bay where there is a nice beach, some shops and a bar. The ship crew also set up a bar next to the beach.

Suggestions

The hidden gem of this island is Saltwhistle Bay, to get to it you have three choices: Walk over the hill road to the left of the landing point, it is very steep up and the same again down, if you are fit it will take around 25 mins, take a jeep-taxi, although P&O state there is no motor transport on this island this is not true, take a water-taxi round the headland, if you walk then try this on the return leg, it is fast, exciting and not for those with a fear of small boats. One-way it cost 5 USD pp for 4 (2015)

Beaches:

One big beach.

Nevis



Charlestown is the capital of the island of Nevis, in the Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis, Leeward Islands, West Indies.

Nevis is one of the most unspoilt and relaxing islands in the Caribbean. Vividly green with blue skies, clean air and long empty beaches, Nevis has a pace of life that encourages you to stop and appreciate all the natural beauty around you. It's a very special place famed for its charm and the easy-going genuineness of its people. Come and discover this remarkable

jewel for yourself.

The tiny island of Nevis is the epitome of a tropical hideaway. With an area of five miles by seven, it's possible to circumnavigate the entire island in less than a two-hour drive. But within this tiny space lies an abundance of sights and delights.

Tee-off for an unforgettable round on the championship golf course at the ultra luxurious Four Seasons resort. And if you'd rather treat yourself to a little TLC, the resort's spa offers a five-star rejuvenation experience. Saddle up and experience the exhilarating thrill—not to mention the romance—of riding across one of the stunning beaches on horseback. Trek through the lush rainforest filled with bamboo and tropical fruit trees and be entertained by the monkeys swinging through the branches above. Or learn more about Alexander Hamilton at the Museum of Nevis History located in the restored stone home in Charlestown where the Founding Father was born.

Dive deeper into the island's history with a visit to one of the old sugar plantations in varying stages of preservation and decay. With intriguing tales to tell, and perhaps a few ghosts for good measure, exploring these relics of the past is a pleasant way to while away an afternoon in paradise.

Suggestions

Alexander Hamilton House. Great museum and tour of the early life of the American Statesman! A must see if you are on Nevis.

Memorial Square, if you love people watching and have nothing else to do...then sitting in the square and soaking up the environment is a good time filler.

St Barts



Gustavia is the main town and capital of the island of Saint Barthélemy.

Red roofed buildings speckle the lush tropical landscape in Gustavia, St. Bart's tiny, relaxed Caribbean capital whose historic sites can be reached in one day of trekking around town. 17th century forts line the harbour, from Fort Karl in the north to Fort Gustaf with its lighthouse and cannons in the south.

Near Fort Gustaf is the popular Shell Beach, where beachcombers rove for sparkling shells. The town's many duty-free boutiques call to shoppers while cosy cafes offer views over the harbour.

Suggestions

Kalinas & Tainos, Exquisite quality pearls and many options for necklaces, bracelets and rings. All customizable as well. Fair prices.

Cruise Destinations

Fort Karl, Climbing up the rugged steps, you eventually reach the top, from where, if you look behind you, you have a gorgeous view of the port of Gustavia, and in front of you is the sea and Shell Beach.

Beaches

Shell Beach, It's called Shell Beach for a reason - the sand is composed of sea shells which give Shell Beach sand a nice pinkish hue. It's a great location.

St Kitts



If you have ever dreamt of the classic Caribbean island, chances are it looked a lot like St. Kitts. You will recognise that mixture of deserted beaches, sleepy villages, lush rainforest greenery and sugarcane fields and maybe even the mini-mountain range with a dormant volcano in its midst.

Yet the first thing you will see when the ship docks is pretty much brand new: St. Kitts cruise terminal and marina complex - a collection of shops, bars, restaurants and gardens. Once through that, though, you can explore the

back streets and impressively restored Georgian buildings of the capital, Basseterre.

Independent since 1983, St. Kitts covers just 65 square miles but has its own World Heritage site: Brimstone Hill fortress. Another option for St. Kitts cruise visitors is the 45-minute ferry to sister island Nevis.

Suggestions

As you walk off the ship's jetty you are immediately into an open air shopping mall consisting of quality jewellers, duty free booze and fags and touristy stuff. As is the norm in the Caribbean the rest of the traders are tour operators and taxi drivers all plying for trade every ten steps of the way.

Through the cruise terminal mall you are directly into the main streets of the capital Basseterre. It is a very pleasant little town, worth having a good look around.

Brimstone Hill Fortress is worth a visit.

For the Golf enthusiasts then there is the Royal St Kitts.

Tour Operators

For a local tour operator: Sir Walter Tours.

A good value tour is their open sided mini bus tour by knowledgeable driver. Walk through the port shopping area and he is usually there waiting for passing trade. His mini bus just sits on the road at the port entrance. US\$25pp for a full 4 hour tour (2017) round the garden with time spent at ex US Presidents plantation gardens which are beautiful on the outskirts of the rain forests. The driver also has a bar in the back of the bus where he dispenses rum punch etc. Far better value than P&O's overpriced fares.

The Island tour with Rosie and Jim's Tours, \$20 which is good value. You visit lots of places including a batik making place and where the Caribbean meets the Atlantic.

Excursions

The trip with P&O, the "Railway Tour" which cost about £66 pp. There are two times for this trip, the early one you have a 10 min bus journey to the rail terminus followed by a 2&1/2 hours rail journey then a 45 min bus return. The later trip reverses this sequence. On balance the earlier time is preferred as you get to the train and are on the trip within a short time, versus the later where you have a 45 min bus journey then have to wait for the earlier trip to arrive at the terminus. The train trip is enjoyable, you get free drinks, rum with everything, and small cake snacks and are entertained by an on-board choir. It's probably the best way, although expensive, to see the island which is largely undeveloped and has few main roads.

Cruise Destinations

Caribbean Cooking. It starts off with being taken to a restored Plantation House which has its own restaurant. You are shown round the house. Then you sit sat at tables for 4, laid for lunch and the Chef a very jolly guy talks about Caribbean cuisine. He then cooked 5 different dishes for you. It was a really interesting excursion.

P&O do a "Nevis sailaway"- brilliant! Catamaran trip to Nevis island and a beach BBQ. Great fun but you do need to book quickly as it gets full up. It is about £75 per head. Also you need to be able to clamber on to the catamaran

P&O - Discover Nevis Island. This is a boat trip to Nevis, followed by a mini bus tour of the Island and a beach stop and included lunch. The trip is absolutely brilliant and well worth doing.

Beaches:

St Kitts is a beautiful lush green volcanic island, but because of its volcanic history the beaches are of blacken sands as opposed to the virgin white normally associated with the Caribbean, but don't let that put you off. Take a taxi to South Friars Bay. The taxi driver will try to persuade you to go to a different beach of his choice, but insist on South Friars bay. It is a very good choice.

Carambola Beach Club it is a taxi ride of about 15 mins from ship and it has a lovely beach, shallow clear water and a lovely new bar and restaurant the food and drink is a little expensive, the facilities, especially the toilets are worth it. The cost should be around US\$32 for 2 return in a taxi. Sunbed was US\$10 and broly US\$10 (2018)

Shipwreck Bay is great for snorkelling. It has basic bar and restaurant facilities and there are makeshift changing stalls, toilets, showers and monkeys living wild in the tree areas. By taxi it is about \$28 USD for a drop off and pick up a couple of hours later.

Carambola Beach Club Nice bar and Restaurant, posh loos.

St Lucia



St Lucia has a fascinating if bloody history with the French and British spending years fighting over it. One look at this luscious island will show you why.

Cloaked in verdant rainforests, its skyline dominated by the dramatic twin peaks of Les Pitons and its gardens a riot of hibiscus and bougainvillea; St. Lucia is the epitome of a Caribbean paradise.

Here you can watch parrots and hummingbirds skim through the trees, bask on beautiful beaches, visit charming fishing villages, view stunning volcanic scenery and glory in the Caribbean's best botanical gardens.

If it is your first visit, an island tour to the dramatic Soufrière volcano will show you the island's full beauty. Boat trips to spot dolphin and whales are also available, as are biking, jeep and hiking tours of the rainforest. But do leave time to explore the shops of Castries, where you can pick up bread, wine and even ketchup made from bananas.

Suggestions

Sometimes this is a tender port and sometimes you may dock. This will depend on the number of cruise ships in port that day. There are two docking areas, Town side or the Point Seraphane side (duty free area). There is normally a shuttle ferry over to Point Seraphane should you be berthed at the other side.

Lots to see, a beautiful island, and the dock area at this location is probably the nicest you will see on any of the stops. The duty-free shopping for booze and jewellery is second only to that in Barbados.

Cruise Destinations

If staying around the terminal area there is a good selection of shops. Free wifi near the Rum Shop and beers at the adjacent bar at 2 for \$5. If you didn't need that wifi there is another bar offering the same beer at 2 for \$3. Decisions, decisions.

If you are here on a Saturday there is the market in Castries, The market was quite large, some inside, some outside and a mixture of tourist and local articles under cover and local produce outside. It is normally busy but there will be enough space to 'window shop' for exotic vegetables and spices

Castries: St. Lucia's bustling capital is home to several of St. Lucia's historical sights, like the La Toc Battery, and beautiful architecture, including the uniquely decorated Cathedral and the Central Library. There is excellent shopping in the town market and Bagshaws, where the art of silkscreening can be observed.

Derek Walcott Square: Located in the capital, Castries, a 400-year-old samaan tree shades the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, built in 1897.

Morne Fortune (Hill of Good Luck): Overlooking Castries, this was a key battleground during the period of skirmishes over colonial possession of St. Lucia. The French began constructing a fortress at this strategic outpost in the 17th century, but it was the British who finished it when the French surrendered in 1796.

Marigot Bay: Another vital wartime base, where a British Admiral once ambushed the French by camouflaging his fleet with palm fronds. This picturesque bay is now a yacht haven and one of St. Lucia's most beautiful spots.

Anse-le-Ray & Canaries: An afternoon visit to these tiny fishing villages offer an interesting study of one of St. Lucia's main traditions, fishing in dug-out canoes.

Tour Operators

For a local tour operator: Cosol Tours or Spencer Ambrose

Cosol Tours do a full island tour taking in the banana plantations, the waterfalls, Marigot Bay where Doctor Doolittle was filmed, the sulphur springs a short catamaran trip to a little beach, etc. This is carried out in 12 seater taxivans with a mobile free bar in tow. Highly recommended. This was \$75pp, (2016). As one cruise put it 'when on St Lucia, it has to be Cosol tours - cannot recommend them highly enough. Book online but pay at the end of the tour.

Try Spencer Ambrose Tour to Jalousie Beach - absolutely fabulous, and highly recommended.

Another operator is curttravelandtours run by Curt Wendal Amedee www.Curttravelandtours.com

Excursions

Try a tranquil and unique journey of an aerial tram into and over the treetops of St Lucia's lush rainforest, the walk through the rain forest is great as well

Land and Sea Excursion - catamaran trip, visit to sulphur geysers and gardens, drive around the island. The Sensations trip was probably one of the best Things To Do Here for me. A really great day out.

Cruise to the Pitons. Not too expensive and in a huge catamaran, the largest we have seen yet. We made passage under power the whole way and the return trip was about 4 hours plus. We were taken into a small bay to see the wonderful scenery and the moored yachts then to a second where we had a swimming opportunity.

Cruise Destinations

Beaches:

Pidgeon Point, a small national park with a tiny but nice beach, a bit of walking and a small museum. As it is a national park you won't get hassled and can leave stuff on the beach when you go to the cafe or go for a walk. It is about 25/30 minutes away from Casties and costs around \$30US one way, plus a \$5US pp entry fee.

Choc beach is also a good place. However, there are no chairs for rent and very little in the way of restaurants and bars. However, when a guy comes along in his fruit laden boat, hacks the top off a fresh coconut, fills it with local rum and serves it to you in the 30 degree heat, you know are not talking Skegness.

Reduit Beach where all the taxi drivers try and take you is always packed and busy. A cab would be about \$25US one way

Try hiring a mini-bus to Rodney Bay beach which is very nice and excellent for swimming. With a bit of haggling you can get the round-trip for between 10 - 16 USD pp. Enjoy lunch at Chef Xaviers eatery.

St Maarten



Half French and half Dutch, St. Martin/Sint Maarten is one of the Caribbean's most diverse and interesting islands.

Ships dock at the Dutch capital Philipsburg, a delightful warren of narrow streets called *steegjies*, where you will find interesting shops and leafy courtyard cafés. Start your exploration at Wathey Square, which is home to a fine collection of traditional West Indian 'gingerbread' houses as well as a colourful market.

If you would prefer to enjoy a little French 'je ne sais quoi', take an island tour to the pretty French capital Marigot, worth visiting for its colourful markets, lovely café-lined waterfront and the chic boutiques of Marina Port La Royale, where you can pick up unusual jewellery and leather goods. Or spend your day on a catamaran trip from Philipsburg for fabulous deep-sea snorkelling with lunch.

Suggestions

This is one of the Caribbean Islands that never disappoints. As soon as you step on to the jetty the bright pastel colours of the port shopping arcade and the steel band sounds all add to give the place an instant feel good factor.

The island is divided into Dutch and French sectors. You actually dock in the Dutch sector capital of Philipsburg and the French sector capital is called Marigot. However, check which day of the week you are in St Maarten - if it's a Sunday then don't go to Marigot as most of it is closed. The Dutch part uses USD, whereas the French part uses the Euro.

To get to the town centre of Philipsburg there are three options, a fair old walk, a taxi, or the most popular the water taxi, these run back and forward to Philipsburg in 5 or 6 minutes, about \$7 dollars return.

Take the local bus to Marigot, it costs €3 or US\$3 each way. It's an "interesting" ride. The bus stop takes a bit of finding; it's in the street that runs parallel with the seafront.

The shops in Philipsburg, St. Maarten, are wonderful the shopping there is the best seen anywhere but watch out for fake designer brands!

A drink on the front {beach} people watch --then a look round the Diamond shop - Leave you CC on the ship if you are easily tempted

Cruise Destinations

For lunch try the Barefoot Restaurant and it is on the right opposite the beach landing as you come in on the Water Taxi. Good views over the beach and your cruise ship.

Try the Honky Tonk Bar for a couple of drinks. Free wifi.

Tip, If you go to the French side you have **GOT** to go to Seraphines in Marigot for tea/coffee and pastries.

Take a tour with one of the many taxi/minibuses just by the shops. Not expensive (you share with others, 4, 6 or 8). Plenty of photo stops including Maho beach & a local market. Most taxis take you to the market in Dutch half then to Maho beach for the planes, \$25 (2016). In Maho the Sunset bar was under redevelopment, 2016, but should be great when finished. You can get a taxi back to the ship at the opposite end of the beach but be aware, they won't leave till full and traffic at tea time, about 5ish is horrendous.

Tour Operator

For a local tour operator: **Bernard's Tours**. Bernard's do an Island tour which finishes up at Maho beach. This includes a beach, then Maho beach for the planes and a visit to the French side. Very good value, especially with the complimentary onboard bar with rum punch, beer, water and soft drinks. The larger planes arrive later in the afternoon but you may have to leave before then as the traffic on the Island can be horrendous due to on-going road works. The drivers are very aware of this but you will get to see some planes landing

Try a tour of the island with Diederick SMX - FREE open bar when you book a private tour. Tour of Island - French and Dutch is \$56pp, (2016). You stop at Seraphines for tea/coffee and the best pastries ever! You may see Calvin the Sea Urchin man and stop to feed the lizards at the side of the road. You have time at Maho to see a few planes arrive and then onto a lovely beach for a few hours. All drinks were included on the tour

Excursions

The P&O 'Sunset Cruise', £34pp, 2016, for 2 hours, rum punch flowed like water, great and worth it.

Try the Explorer Cruise and Island tour. Don't drink too many rum punches on the cruise part of the trip. Americas Cup Sailing is great fun. One of us was iceberg lookout and the other something equally outrageous.

P&O shore excursion to Botanical Gardens is not a good choice. Un-roadworthy coach and gardens were like a local park.

Beaches:

There are many good beaches. Philipsburg beach, close to where you berth is beautiful cream coloured sand meeting ice blue clear water and is a water taxi ride or a ten minute walk from where the shop docks. It is narrow but long so there's lots of space. There are sun loungers and shades available with the town stretching along the back of the beach. There are lots of bars behind the beach with plenty of waiters to bring you your relaxing drink there are buckets of beer available, at \$2 a bottle. There's also free wifi if you buy a drink. Maho beach by the airport and watch the planes land, it is a great spectacle and not for the faint hearted. US\$25 gets 2 sunbeds broly and beers, but it is worth walking along to see best deal on the day.

Maho beach, where the planes land. Now it pays to search around. Cruisers have quoted taxi journeys ranging from \$1.50pp to \$8pp each way. 2016 prices.

St Vincent



St Vincent can be found in the Caribbean Sea, between Saint Lucia and Grenada. With stunning white sandy beaches and beautiful blue waters, it's a perfect place to relax and take in the Caribbean atmosphere. The island's capital - Kingstown - is a livelier place to explore, with pretty cobbled streets.

St Vincent, though small, is the main island of the Grenadines, which also include the very upmarket small islands of Mustique and Necker (Richard Branson's little place!). It is only 18 miles by 11 and has a population of about 100,000, many of whom live in the capital, Kingstown. It is a very mountainous, volcanic island.

This was the only island cruisers have felt uncomfortable in - but that was in the town itself and some have said they would definitely either just stay close to the ship or go on an organised excursion. Kingstown seemed to be more authentic than any other of our Caribbean ports of call. Whether authentic means poor, or scruffy (as some other cruisers said) or just a vague authentic I'm not sure. One cruiser said, "I'm not sure I felt welcomed, simply tolerated. We felt very much like spectators." Another said, if you want to go ashore, then go on a tour.

If you do decide to take a stroll into town then it is pretty busy around the docks and onto the town/city centre, with market stalls and overflow from the shops squished into every space and traffic trying to squeeze through. However, there is very little for the tourist; and the market appeared to be primarily for the residents.

You berth to a specialist pier built out into what was almost a fiord, with steep sides both sides of you.

Suggestions

Walk up to the fort it's a long way but worth it to see and chat with the locals and there is a lovely refreshment stop part way up where you may meet a grey haired man who will tell you all about island life.

Tour Operator

Quency Lewis, <https://www.facebook.com/foreigntourssvg/> highly recommended for your DIY Tour.

Excursions

The Waterfall and Coast excursion to various places of the island including walk in rainforest to a waterfall which you can stand under/in (take swimwear) and the set of Pirates of the Caribbean and a nice lunch, then a cruise back to the port. Cost is £80pp (2017). One of P&O's better tours and makes the most of St. Vincent.

Try; Escape to Bequia - a catamaran across to Bequia sailing past some lovely coastline, have drinks and a lovely Caribbean lunch and spent time on a beach. A great trip and well worth the money. Now, you can DIY this by local ferry a lot cheaper. However, the ferry timings do not give you much time there and the ferry can be, and has been, cancelled at short notice leaving you stranded on Bequia.

Best of St Vincent tour. This takes you through the town and poor district and then onto Fort Charlotte where some of the scenes for Pirates of the Caribbean were shot. The views from the 1,600 foot heights were impressive. There is a walking tour of the botanical gardens among other highlights.

Cruise Destinations

Beaches:

Just across the bay is the little known gem of Young Island. This is a private island largely occupied by a single hotel, but visitors are welcome with the restriction that you cannot use the sunbeds and hammocks belonging to the hotel. Just stand on the beach and a water-taxi will appear to take you across, as usual negotiate the price, US\$20-30 to a beach 10 minutes ride away, and you have to enter by wading into the water and exit onto a wet jetty. Just stretch out your beach towel and enjoy a lovely setting with excellent swimming, including a swim-out bar just off the beach.

Tobago



In the sun Tobago looks lovely; and its British names of Scarborough, your port of call, Roxborough, Goodwood, Cambleton, Plymouth and Speyside.

A place of mixed reviews, some say this is a stay on ship port. Whilst other say explore.

It is marketing itself as an eco-tourism destination and is fiercely proud of what it has to offer, including the oldest legally protected rainforest in the world, coral reefs, turtles

and over 220 species of birds.

Normally a Tender port.

As you disembark there is a small army of volunteer tourist guides, happy to give directions or advice or, if wanted, to walk with tourists to various destinations.

Try the well regarded botanical gardens. Easy to find and they are pretty and very well kept

Beaches:

The beach at Pigeon Point is the only beach were people have been to where you have to pay an entrance fee. In its defence it is a private beach it as a 3 USD pp entrance fee.

Right next door to PP there is a hidden gem, Store Bay beach. Store Bay is public and free, you can get 2 sunbeds and broly easily for 7 USD.

Tortola



If you want to experience the 'undiscovered' Caribbean, cruise to the unspoiled British Virgin island of Tortola. Rising to 1,709 feet at its highest point and famed for its rugged volcanic landscape, Tortola has proved difficult to develop as a major tourist haunt, and so has preserved its charm.

Its quaint capital, Road Town, is charming and compact. Just five minutes walk from the tender drop-off at Wickhams Quay you will find Main Street, home to a colourful crafts market and a range of small speciality shops selling Tortolan

ceramics, Mexican glassware and unusual carvings sculpted from sea flotsam.

You will also find some of the loveliest and least crowded beaches in the Caribbean. At Cane Garden Bay you can tuck into a barbecued freshly caught fish; snorkellers will find the most eye-boggling marine life at Lower Belmont Bay, while those who prefer to stay dry can stroll through spectacular virgin rainforest at Mount Sage National Park.

Cruise Destinations

Suggestions

Road Town is the deep harbour docking port and the town now has a very smart new Cruise Terminal. The town itself is pretty basic. You could wander round the market close to the ship or get a taxi to Pussers Landing but there isn't much to see there other than expensive shops and yachts. Beware, do your planning, everything is closed on a Sunday.

There is a small but pleasant Botanic Garden on Tortola. About 10-15 minutes' walk from the boat. There is plenty of shade there.

The Tortola excursions are cheaper than the other islands.

An island tour on an open-sided bus is good. The driver gave us a wonderful insight into his island - the people and the way of life. Going up some of the steep hills with a view of the sea on one side and the wonderful Caribbean flowers and shrubs on the other was lovely - and the smell of the pines and the herbs - it was just magic!

There are plenty of taxis available to do an island tour for \$15-20' or a trip to the beach. Taxi prices are displayed in the small terminal where you dock.

Cruisers have taken a tour bus from outside the port for \$20pp, (2016), if you know where you want to go and there are enough of you they will change their planned itinerary. So, Pussers Landing/Sopers Hole, the Bomba shack where they now sell drinks, then on to a Rum distillery is a good route. Then you are dropped back at Road Town where Pussers Outpost is. However, this can be very busy.

Regarding Pussers Outpost, the Painkiller will set you back \$9 and many have mentioned that the service is terrible.

Try the swim with dolphins. Around £200 for a family of 4,(2016). The photos are quite expensive to buy though.

For ideas try here: <https://youtu.be/ssEhP8MFwSU>

Tour Operators

Try the tour bus, driver Kittie, it was \$25pp for 3 hour tour, (2016), but it lasts closer to 4 hours, including 1 hour on Cane Garden Beach. Well worth it.

Excursions

Escape to Virgin Gorda: is said to be the best excursion by far but you do need to be able to walk up a slope. It is about a 45 minute ferry or fast motor boat ride across but it is an amazing place. The paths to and fro were extremely well maintained and easily negotiated with care but you did need to have a reasonable degree of mobility. The P&O price was £38 pp (2013) which compared favourably with the local ferry at \$38 pp. On the local ferry trip you would also need to factor in the risk, the distance from the ship to the ferry, and the \$10 taxi at Virgin Gorda.

Jost Van Dyke : This is the place to go to get away from it all. You will escape from the rest of the ship who go to "Cane garden Beach " This can be done DIY but if offered think about taking the cruise tour from Tortola, this way you are covered in case of the cataraman having a problem or being late back to the ship. It is about a 45 minute motor boat ride through Sir Francis Drake Channel takes you to an island on the other side of Tortola where you have a couple of hours on a fine white sand beach White Bay. The beaches are uncrowded; the local beach bars are so laid back and inexpensive for drinks and food, try the Soggy Dollar Bar. Overall a good value and a nice excursion.

Cruise Destinations

Skyworld and Cane Garden Beach: excursion is great value if you have not been to Tortola you see the island have a great photo opportunity (Skyworld is in fact a restaurant in the middle of the island where you can go on the roof and see for miles on a clear day) then go to Cane Garden Beach for lunch and time on the beach.

Beautiful BVI trip. This starts off with a trip on a large catamaran which has seating in a downstairs air conditioned saloon - very plush - or up on top. You stop off at various places around the British Virgin islands, you don't go ashore anywhere but he then tells you a lot about the history of each venue. Rum punch is served. The Captain is very knowledgeable and very friendly. At the end of the Catamaran trip - about an hour or so - you then get dropped off at Pussers Landing where you can have a drink or coffee before joining the buses for a trip around the island - lots of very hairy bends but beautiful views of the island.

Beaches:

If you just want a beach then *Cane Garden Bay* is easily available by local open sided buses and cheaper than the ship excursion costs just allow plenty of time to get there and back. The beach has lovely white sand and calm sea, but it does get crowded if more than one ship is port.

Brewers Bay, a lot quieter than Cane Garden, plenty of shade from the trees at the back of the beach

Trinidad



Mixed reviews, another one of those, some say stay on and other get off.

Some say that this is a tiny little port with the worst dock area they have seen on the entire cruise, and the capital, Port of Spain, is no better and a chance to stay on the ship and chill.

Others say, this is so different, Trinidad is a large island, with 1.3million inhabitants, and Port of Spain is a very prosperous city where you are met at the bottom of the gangway by groups of colourful dancers, drummers and stilt walkers. It all looked fabulous and a good reason to consider going there again and getting the timing right next time!

The shops can be seen in any run-down main street in the world, the city is choked with traffic, seedy, run-down and has an intimidating, threatening atmosphere about it. Apart from the very friendly tourist officials the whole place was unfriendly and unwelcoming, filled with low-life.

Different people were all warned by different taxi drivers about crime in Trinidad - best not to wear jewellery. This is one place where if you are interested in a cruise trip then take it.

It is worth knowing that the first week of February is Carnival in Trinidad. The locals reckon it is second only to Rio.

To explore Port of Spain on foot you need to cross a 6 lane highway, even with the aid of traffic lights, this is most probably one of the most perilous things you will do! Once across then walk past the government buildings which is just a new white block but has lovely murals depicting the islands history

Suggestions

Brian Lara, cricketer, hails from Trinidad and they are very proud of him. In Independence Square, which is far from a square, more a long street, which has Brian Lara Promenade as a pedestrian walkway, through the centre.

Cruise Destinations

One good trip is to the Caroli wetlands Bird Reserve, just outside the city. A short journey to the 'quayside', where flat bottomed boats are waiting. Entry to the boats is by stepping in but it is quite a drop down. Each boat holds about 40-50 passengers and with the rows only being 5 or 6 maximum, there was a good view (assuming that the person in front of you - with the meg telephoto, of course - didn't stand up and block your view, meaning you have to stand too, meaning the person behind you, etc)

It is a magical trip - memories to last for years. You see so much wildlife, including mud skippers and sandpipers at the start, snakes, molluscs, crabs in the various types of mangrove and a wonderful wide variety of birds. Add to that it was just lovely quietly going amongst the natural waterways, pausing whenever there was a sight to see. Often you travel in leafy tunnels, where the trees met above your heads over the water

Another recommendation is the Emperor Valley Zoo. It is next to a lovely Royal Botanical Gardens and is within a 'good walk from the port.

So, you pay your money etc....

Virgin Gorda



Virgin Gorda is the third-largest and second most populous of the British Virgin Islands.

Local lore has it that the unusual shape of this little bit of paradise reminded Christopher Columbus of a reclining, voluptuous woman, so he named it Virgin Gorda, the "Fat Virgin." She is suitably adorned with dramatic heights that plunge down from Gorda Peak to the sparkling turquoise waters far below.

This is a good place to explore, swim with dolphins, or hike the rugged trails throughout the island. Virgin Gorda is most famous for The Baths, where giant granite boulders are strewn across the beach and in the water, creating pools, caves, and grottos - a sort of natural water park.

Evidence of the rich heritage of African, Indian and Spanish history is plentiful, from the Spanish ruins at Little Fort National Park to the Cornish Copper Mines, where the ruins are set against the azure sea at the island's southwestern tip. This eclectic influence extends to Virgin Gorda's local cuisine, shops, arts, fashion and gifts.

Suggestions

The Copper Mine, this area gives visitors another perspective of past life on the island from when the mine was operating.

Virgin Gorda Peak, There are 2 ways of arriving at the top. One way is a 30 min hike & the other a 20 min. Not a very difficult hike. A few upwards rocks etc. Mostly in the shade. When you get to the top you're treated to a 360 degree view from a 8 meter wooden structure, You really are at the highest point on Virgin Gorda. The trail is easy to follow without a map.

Beaches

Savannah Bay, Lovely long white sand beach on the skinny part of Virgin Gorda. A favourite beach for tourists and locals alike.

The Baths, this place is awesome. The views, the natural caves, water is so clear... This is a gem of paradise.

Cruise Destinations

Devil's Bay, Absolutely beautiful location. Large beach with plenty of sand and rocks for everybody. The caves are spectacular. Definitely a few spots where you have to get down on all fours or on your bottom to get through.

BAHAMAS

Freeport



Freeport is the main city on Grand Bahama, an island in the northwest Bahamas off the Florida coast. It's best known for the oceanfront Lucaya district, with beaches, resorts and shopping.

Suggestions

Port Lucaya Marketplace; Lots of international restaurants; Greek, Irish, Mexican, Sushi and more. Also many shops. Some with nice items, some with trinkets you probably see at every tourist stop in the world. Several fun bars.

Count Basie Square; If you are on a trip to the Bahamas this is one of the must see for taking photographs! Lots of colour, pretty boats and shacks selling local goodies including shaved ice!

Beaches

Taino Beach; The beach was very beautiful and clean. There were activities on the beach such as banana boat, jet skis and a trampoline in the water.

Barbary Beach; Miles long stretch of sugar white sand, shallow water and privacy. No resorts or hotels, just unspoiled solitude!

Great Stirrup Cay



Great Stirrup Cay is a small island that is part of the Berry Islands in the Bahamas. Norwegian Cruise Line purchased the island from the Belcher Oil Company in 1977 and developed it into a private island for their cruise ship passengers

Great Stirrup Cay is our sun-drenched private island paradise reserved just for Norwegian Cruise Line guests.

The island is yours for the day so relax by walking along the expanded white sand beaches or, if you get a little

adventurous, get up close and personal with the wildlife in Stingray Encounter.

Snorkelling in crystal-clear water beside a school of tropical fish is just one of the dozens of Great Stirrup Cay activities to do on the 250-acre island oasis.

Enjoy your favourite cocktail followed by a complimentary midday beach-side BBQ as calm ocean breezes blow through your hair.

Cruise Destinations

Half Moon Cay



This is Holland America's private retreat for passengers on the line's Caribbean and Panama Canal sailings. However, Carnival ships sometimes visit, too, as Holland America is owned by Carnival Corp. Located less than 100 miles southeast of Nassau, the island houses its passenger facilities on less than 50 acres; much of the remaining land serves as a preserve for migratory birds. Day-to-day operations are handled by nearly 100

employees who reside on nearby islands.

Physically, the island boasts a 2.5-mile-long crescent-shaped beach -- the source of the name Half Moon Cay. Facilities are divided into three sections: the welcome centre, Bahamian Village and Tropics Restaurant. The welcome centre features an information booth, restrooms, a bar, a Bahamian straw market, an ice cream shop, a post office, a first aid station, an island shop and tram stop.

Things to do

Mainly a relaxing destination with two miles of white sand. It has watersports, nature hikes, deep sea fishing, and more. For a really chill out time reserve a private air-conditioned cabana by the sea. For adventure, feed the gentle rays at Stingray Cove, ride a horse into the surf or visit Half Moon Lagoon, the island's aqua park.

Nassau



Nassau is the capital of the Bahamas. It lies on the island of New Providence, with neighbouring Paradise Island accessible via Nassau Harbour bridges.

With the lure of a big city and the ease of tropical utopia, Nassau & Paradise Island are considered by many as, well, paradise. Nassau, the capital of The Bahamas, is a bustling metropolitan hub full of culture and modern amenities.

Suggestions

Queen's Staircase; The entrance to this landmark is close to the water tower and behind the public hospital. A bit tricky to find but fun to see.

Fort Charlotte; The fort is the largest on the islands. It's British-colonial in style, and was built out of limestone in the late 18th century. It has a moat, dungeons and 42 cannons. It has never been used in battle. It sits on a hill overlooking Nassau. Guide yourself through the structure at your own pace or pay a guide in tips.

Pirates of Nassau Museum; If you like history, have an imagination and have the time to listen to the narratives that done in a few spots, you will Love this little place.

Beaches

Cable Beach; The beach and water by the Melia resort are amazing. Crystal clear water and white power sand. Limited services or refreshments available nearby.

Junkanoo Beach; Closest beach to the cruise port, it's easy walking distance on the opposite side of the British Colonial Hilton Nassau, it's free.

Princess Cays



Eleuthera in the Bahamas is one hundred miles long and only two miles wide. It offers unspoiled beaches. However, it is has a private resort for Princess Cruises that you will visit here. Princess Cays is situated on more than 40 acres and features over a half-mile of white-sand shoreline, all at the southern tip of the island.

The resort boasts outstanding amenities while carefully preserving this natural paradise. Take in the views from the observation tower. Enjoy a complimentary beach barbecue.

Sip a cool drink or browse the shops and the local craft market. All of Princess Cays' facilities are linked by walkways. Recreational activities abound. Enjoy volleyball and a full range of water sports, or simply relax on the beach.

Suggestions

The cruise line does run excursions to some of the smaller villages outside the complex, such as Rock Sound (known for its bottomless blow hole) and the picturesque fishing village of Tarpum Bay. (Although it's Eleuthera's best-known tourist draw, Harbour Island, with its tony shops and restaurants, is too far away to visit.)

But, for most people, Princess Cays remains a guilt-free beach day, where you can rent water toys, sign up for a snorkel excursion or simply hang out in a private cabana. Bring water shoes, as the shoreline by the water can have sharp rocks and coral fragments.

BELIZE

Belize City



Belize is a nation on the eastern coast of Central America, with Caribbean Sea shorelines to the east and dense jungle to the west. It's known for its beaches, eco-lodges, scuba diving and sport fishing. Offshore, the massive Belize Barrier Reef, dotted with hundreds of cayes, hosts rich marine life. Belize's jungle areas are rich with Mayan ruins.

Suggestions

Xunantunich; This ruin can be tricky to say but don't let that discourage you from visiting it. You'll need to take a hand ferry across the river. The entrance fee to the park was \$5US. The ruins are massive and grounds very well maintained.

Caracol Mayan Ruins; Very nice and impressive set of Mayan ruins with great views from the top of one of the pyramids. There is excellent birdwatching on the grounds, toucans, trogons, woodpeckers and many many other birds.

The Great Blue Hole at Lighthouse Reef; if you are in to diving then this is a must. It is a long boat ride out, but the crew and a bigger boat make it OK. The dive is not for very new divers as it is deep (130 feet). You stay down at that depth for about 5-8 minutes, then begin a slow ascent. The stalagmites are large, like telephone poles. The atmosphere down there is very cool and silhouettes of sharks are visible.

Cruise Destinations

Belize Zoo; A walk through is interesting. They have all local animals including birds to several jaguars. The Director's Tour of the Belize Zoo as a DIY. The price, including pickup and return to the ship (about an hour each way) was \$400 for the tour, plus \$150 for the pickup and return for 5. Averaging out to \$110 per person, this is cheaper than most of the excursions offered by the ship, and much better.

Harvest Caye



The island is located in southern Belize.

Although Harvest Caye was designed specifically to receive cruisers, it doesn't feel forced. Passengers won't find high-end jewellery stores or pushy shore excursion vendors hawkling tours. What you will find is a glittering oasis that's well thought out, easy to navigate and eco-friendly.

Don't call it a private island, though. What differentiates Harvest Caye is that, like Grand Turk, Amber Cove or

Mahogany Bay, it's not necessarily an extension of your cruise. When you visit, you'll find the island staffed by Belizean locals, rather than the ship's crew, and you'll have to pay for lunch, just as if you ate ashore in any other port that's not a private island.

Private Retreats Eleven beachfront villas are available for daily rental. Each has air-conditioning and its own living area, private bathroom, outdoor shower and loungers. Prices start at \$475 for up to six people. Fifteen poolside cabanas are also offered from \$199 for the day.

Nature Centre As part of its commitment to conservation and eco-friendly tourism, Norwegian has included a nature centre on Harvest Caye. You can walk through it for free and check out boa constrictors, toucans and scarlet macaws. There's even an enclosed butterfly garden that's also home to several dozen iguanas.

Zipline One of the most noticeable landmarks on the island is a giant lighthouse, housing Harvest Caye's for-fee zipline. Two separate runs are offered. The first is split into segments, and the second covers a 1,300-foot-long expanse between the lighthouse and the beach.

Water Fun For those who wish to stay active in the water, Harvest Caye has a lagoon with kayaks, paddleboards and small motorized boats for rent. There is a gigantic pool, with a swim-up bar, in-water seating and a food service window.

BRITISH ISLANDS

Bermuda



If you are on a smaller cruise ship you will dock straight into Hamilton. Then depending on size you could be in Kings Wharf or St George. However, ferries, taxis and buses operate all day to take you to and from to Hamilton.

Bermuda is a British island territory in the North Atlantic, off the eastern U.S., known for its distinctive blend of British and American culture and pink-sand beaches such as Elbow Beach and Horseshoe Bay. Its massive Royal

Naval Dockyard complex combines modern attractions like the interactive Dolphin Quest with a look at maritime history at the National Museum of Bermuda.

Suggestions

Gibbs Hill Lighthouse gives panoramic views of the entire island, while its beacon can be seen up to 60km away. And the Royal Navy Dockyard, with its Georgian style Keep, is intriguing to explore.

Cruise Destinations

Crystal & Fantasy Caves. It is a bit weird...you have to walk through the hotel grounds to get to the caves - it is well marked. Wear comfortable shoes and be careful some of the stairs are slippery. Going down into the cave is the easy part. Climbing the 186 stair steps out will get the heart pumping.

Royal Naval Dockyard . At the westernmost portion of the island, this offers glimpses into the early history with massive stone walls, buildings and fortification from the time it served as the Royal Naval Base. The stone work tells much about the island's geology. There is a lovely harbor and many small shops and restaurants to explore. This is fantastic to visit, so much history, so much to see and do. The bus system takes you right to the dock so very easy to get to.

Beaches; If you are looking to relax and take in the sun then you are spoilt for choice; Horseshoe Bay's wide crescent of soft pink sand is arguably Bermuda's most beautiful beach. Elbow Beach Picturesque beach, not very crowded, Jobson's Cove Beach, is secluded and the water is calm very beautiful sand and quite sheltered from the wind. To name a few.

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

Saint Croix



The Caribbean island of St. Croix is practically the backdrop of a Hollywood love story. White sand beaches and lush rainforests set the scene for tropical bliss. Take in the historic small town charm of Christiansted and Frederiksted, sip your way through a spirited tour of the Cruzan Rum Distillery or explore the ruins of a sugar plantation. And the diving...oh, the diving. Think shipwrecks, think vibrant ocean life, think endless underwater possibilities.

Suggestions

Fort Christiansvaern; This fort, which guarded the Christiansted harbour when St Croix was a Danish sugar colony, is well preserved, and the architecture is beautiful. It is only US\$3 per person entrance fee and kids enter for free. There's a great view of Christiansted harbour from the Water Battery.

Diageo's Captain Morgan Rum Distillery; You start with a walk through display showing you the history of St Croix, Sugar production and rum making. Then a short film, followed by a tram tour of the plant, finally a couple of drinks at the Captain Morgan bar.

Beaches

Rainbow Beach; This beach is a great place to swim, relax, treasure hunt and snorkel. A lot of locals frequent this beach and the atmosphere is great.

Cane Bay; It is an authentic and nice beach, good casual food and beach bar. Great for Snorkelling to.

St John



Saint John is one of the Virgin Islands in the Caribbean Sea. It is the smallest of the U.S. Virgin Islands, St. John is only nine miles by three miles, and two-thirds of that area is national park.

In colonial times almost the entire island was clear-cut to make room for sugar cane; now there is fervent support for protecting the new growth, much of it introduced. Hiking trails of all lengths and levels of difficulty traverse these acres, and lead through the ruins of plantations. The park

also contains 5,650 acres of submerged land, with an abundance of coral gardens.

Two-thirds of St John is a protected national park, with gnarled trees and spiky cacti spilling over its edges. There are no airports or cruise-ship docks, and the usual Caribbean resorts are few and far between. It's blissfully low-key compared to its neighbour St Thomas.

Hiking and snorkelling are the big to-dos. Trails wind by petroglyphs and sugar-mill ruins, and several drop out onto beaches prime for swimming with turtles and spotted eagle rays.

Suggestions

Annaberg Sugar Plantation, One of the larger and better preserved plantation ruins. There are boarded signs with history remarks all over the plantation. The windmill is beautiful, and like previously mentioned, the views at the top are BREATHTAKING. you see other islands, the different colors in the water.

Cinnamon Bay Nature Trail, The trail here is very informational and worth doing, but be aware that it is not well marked but still worth a visit.

Bamboo Studio, always has the most unique jewellery and is the top recommended shop on the island.

Mongoose Junction, is an open air venue, with lush terraces and walkways that meander and adjoin our 30 shops and restaurants, built with native stone and gorgeous mahogany,.

Beaches

Trunk Bay, Trunk Bay is an exceptional beach. The beach facilities are also great here. There is a large shower area and a small bar / restaurant. You can get close enough to the treeline to find shade if you do not have an umbrella.

Maho Beach, If you are looking for a quiet, relaxing beach experience, go to Maho. While amenities are scarce (porta potties), the beach is beautiful, shallow and calm.

St. Thomas



St. Thomas, gateway island of the U.S. Virgin Islands in the Caribbean. Although it's only 32 square miles in size, St. Thomas has a million miles worth of things to do. Go shopping and sailing, snorkelling and sightseeing, or diving and dining.

Enjoy the island's world-renowned golf course, picture-perfect beaches and spectacular nightlife. Take the Skyride 700 feet above the city or climb the famous 99 Steps of Charlotte Amalie for an incomparable view of the Caribbean.

St. Thomas has two cruise ship harbors - the Havensight Cruise Ship Dock with 3 docking spots and the Crown Bay Cruise Ship Dock with 2 docking spots. Even so, sometimes cruise ships have to anchor in the bay right in front of Charlotte Amalie and be tendered to town. Wherever your cruise ship docks it will be very easy to travel around.

During the busy season, it is not uncommon to have six or more cruise ships docked in port on any given day and that leads to a lot of people in one place. St. Thomas has cemented itself as a cruise destination and many cruise lines, including Royal Caribbean, send many of their ships here. More than likely you will feel engulfed in a sea of other tourists.

Suggestions

Most of the historical landmarks in St. Thomas are located in Charlotte Amalie and there is an interesting itinerary that will take you to all of these, including the famous Blackbeard's Castle, the 99 steps and Fort Christian amongst 20 other landmarks. But if you do not have the time, the energy or the interest to see all of these, you should at least visit the Synagogue with its unusual sand floor.

Go to Mountain Top (it's a bit of a tourist trap, but the view is worth it)

St. Thomas Skyride: whisks visitors up to 700 feet above the town of Charlotte Amalie for some of the most dramatic views in the Caribbean. Once at the pinnacle, guests can enjoy shopping and dining.

Coral World Ocean Park: One of St. Thomas's greatest attractions, Sea Trek along the ocean floor, encounter turtles, sharks and stingrays, feed the lorikeets, snuba and more. Other highlights include the Undersea Observatory Tower built 30 feet underwater and the Marine Gardens gallery of 21 aquariums.

Phantasea Tropical Botanical Garden: is a lush tropical botanical garden featuring over 1000 orchids scattered throughout the garden, hundreds of bromeliads, heliconias, gingers, palms and many other tropical plants and trees. with views. It is located on a mountain ridge with views across to Magens Bay and Tortola

Blackbeard's Castle: This watchtower built in 1679, by the infamous pirate Edward Teach, nicknamed Blackbeard.

Drake's Seat: One of the island's best lookouts, Drake's Seat offers a panoramic view of Magens Bay and the U. S. and British Virgin Islands to the east.

Try the Ice Bar The bar itself is quite small. Everything is ice there, even the glasses, and it has some really good ice sculptures. A bit pricy, but you get a warm cape and gloves to wear and a free drink. Visitors will arrive at the entrance of the Magic Ice Gallery facing the waterfront on Veterans Drive. The building is across the alley from Pizza Hut and fills a space between its storefront and its Main Street exit.

<http://www.magicice.no/>

Cruise Destinations

Shopping: St. Thomas offers a lot of shopping options around and near the cruise terminal. Being an American island, the prices here are fairly close to what you'd expect to find back on the mainland. The island boasts good prices on jewellery, liquor, linens, china and crystal. By far jewellery is what is in demand here and there are lots of places to check out. There is no sales tax in the United States Virgin Islands so you can take advantage of the duty-free allowance. (remember to save your receipts).

For more ideas try here: <http://www.visitusvi.com/stthomas/homepage>

Beaches:

When you think of a Caribbean beach, St. Thomas is the sort of beach experience you will have in mind and it features some very beautiful beaches, including Magens Bay, which is among the most beautiful beaches in the world. There are also other beaches here that offer beautiful water colour and very fine sand, like Bluebeards Beach, Bolongo Bay, Coki Beach, Lindberg Beach, Sapphire Beach or Hull Bay that you will surely find a nice spot to enjoy the spectacular Caribbean Sea with its crystal clear turquoise waters.

The Orient Beach on the French side (not the nudist area though!). It's a gorgeous sandy beach with sun loungers with thick padded cushions.

COLOMBIA

Cartagena



Charming, narrow streets host quaint colonial buildings, while the magnificent cathedral and palace dominate the city. The walled old town brimming with colonial history, brightly painted facades, charming balconies and delightful plazas awash with flowers.

Suggestions

Try a carriage ride through the narrow cobbled streets of the old walled city, look out for the colonial houses, the Heredia Theatre, the City Hall and the Inquisition Palace at Bolivar Square. You can also admire the charming balconies, old squares and Spanish style buildings.

The Walled City is a protected heritage site, and the historical epicenter of the city of Cartagena de Indias. Climb the walls themselves to enjoy unique views out to sea, and a bird's-eye view of the area's beautiful buildings, which date back to the colonial era. Then, climb back down to explore the numerous churches, plazas, museums, and other attractions which lie within their borders. Notice the unique mixture of Republican period architecture and more modern buildings of various styles, which makes the Walled City what it is today.

Plaza de la Aduana, crowned by a statue of Christopher Columbus, this is the largest of the squares in the Walled City. With the tourist information center and money changers located here, it is a good place to start your exploration of the colonial streets.

Santa Marta



Santa Marta is a city on the Caribbean Sea in the northern Colombian department of Magdalena. A busy port, it was also the first Spanish settlement in Colombia. It's the gateway for trips into the Tayrona National Natural Park, and for multiday guided treks to the Lost City (Teyuna) archaeological site in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta mountains.

It is the oldest city in Colombia and fringed by beautiful beaches and the stunning mountains of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta range. Ancient ruins take cover in the lush mangrove forests of Tayrona National Park, the perfect spot for a day hike. Snorkel along vibrant reefs, then make your way to a café for a multicultural meal that incorporates the flavours of Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe.

Suggestions

Tayrona Natural Parque; it is worth the walk, and as much as it is photographic, in reality it's even better.

Quinta de San Pedro Alejandrino; It is a lovely place... Surrounded by lush centenary trees that will shelter your walk as you are transported back to the times of the independence.

Aquarium; This is a small aquarium but does have a good selection of fish and sea life to see. The dolphin and seal lion shows are worth seeing and they seem well looked after.

Carpe Diem; Puts tours of chocolate factories like Hershey and Ghirardelli to shame. This reveals the story behind how a seed in the jungle became the overwhelming confection of the world. You see the pods growing, they cut them open and you can taste the fruit.

COSTA RICA

Limon



Limon is your gateway to some of the most extraordinary experiences imaginable. Like the Rainforest Aerial Tram ride through the canopy of a 1,000-acre nature reserve next to a national park. On a jungle boat trip you can travel silently through the network of jungle canals and enjoy the chance to see what a rainforest life is like at ground level.

In another part of the forest, you can even travel through the canopy Tarzan-style (except in slow-motion) on a series of horizontal traverse cables. Multi-coloured butterflies and birds fly by while you absorb the atmosphere of this living, breathing forest. You may see some monkeys but that is more likely on the Tortuguero Canals, another national park - one created to protect the green turtle (Tortuguero).

Nearly a quarter of Costa Rica is national parks as the country boasts 8,000 species of plants, 859 species of birds and 10% of the world's butterflies.

If there was ever a country created for eco-tourism, it is Costa Rica. Effectively a biological corridor between North and South America and with its neo-tropical climate and rainforests acting as a sort of biosphere, it now has one of the greatest biological diversities in the world. Nearly a quarter of its landmass is designated as national parks and it houses 8,000 species of plants, 859 species of birds, 10% of the world's butterflies and as many snakes as you could shake a stick at.

Costa Rica has also -- rare for the region -- been a peaceful, democratic country for a century or more.

Cruise Destinations

Abolishing all its armed services in 1949 to spend the money on improving social, medical and educational facilities has helped in this and also won it Nobel Peace prizes, not to mention UN-underpinned eternal neutrality from 1983.

It is not crime-free, though, so it still pays to take care in its towns and streets. However, it is one of the most relaxed and welcoming places to visit in Central America, and Puerto Limon is well-located for its best eco-tourist attractions.

Suggestions

The Veragua Rain Forest with its Aerial Tram is a unique eco-tourism and research facility, making this a truly beautiful and amazing and fascinating trip. Enjoy an enchanting trip through the rainforest canopy and its hanging gardens of plants and animals, hidden at the tops of tall trees. Home to two thirds of the rainforest species, the canopy is a little-known world of tremendous beauty. The tram ride lasts for approximately 1½ hours, including stops along the way. Afterwards, take an optional walk through the rainforest with your experienced guide. If doing this as a DIY then the entrance fee is, \$66 for rainforest & tramway with an additional \$33 for the zipline. The various exhibits of animals and plants was interesting and informative.

Try the Tortuguero Canal. These canals are part of the Tortuguero National Park located in the Limon Province of Costa Rica. This wet and humid area is popular for its rich biological diversity and ecosystems that supports threatened flora and fauna species including sea turtles that are found on the beaches and canal banks. It is a relaxing 90 minute covered boat ride and you may see several interesting species of birds including kingfishers, various types of herons, iguana's, monkey's and sloths in the trees.

CUBA

Havana



A beautiful port. If you berth in Old Havana it is an easy walk to explore the town. Old Havana is a UNESCO world heritage site.

A city trapped in time, Havana captures the imagination like no other. Faded glamour meets careful colonial-era reconstruction with a backdrop of irresistible colour. Walk El Malecón, the walkway bordering the ocean; visit Old Havana and the Catedral de San Cristóbal; and listen for salsa music, open-air bazaars and parties that last all night.

Suggestions

Old Havana; Very cool area to walk around and there are a number of fun local bars. Amazing architecture. The National Ballet is in a stunning building right next door.

Plaza de la Catedral; One of the postcard sights, so it's pretty much unavoidable. It is, of course, always crowded but very beautiful in its colonial splendour. Just make sure you ignore the restaurant touts. Food is cheaper elsewhere.

National Museum of Fine Arts; Interesting museum. It is a variety of modern and classic art. There are no photographs allowed on the second floor.

Isla de la Juventud



Isla de la Juventud is the second-largest Cuban island and the seventh-largest island in the West Indies. The island was called the Isle of Pines until 1978.

About 100km south of the mainland, the little-visited Isla de la Juventud (Island of Youth) is the largest of over three hundred scattered emerald islets that make up the Archipiélago de los Canarreos, a fantasy paradise of pearl-white sand and translucent, coral-lined shallows.

Suggestions

Punta Frances Marine National Park; Most amazing Marine Park in Cuba. Recommended for divers. Best diving sites. Home for the Underwater Sea Competitions.

Presidio Modelo; This is the huge prison built in 1926 where Fidel Castro, his brother Raul and other revolutionaries were imprisoned after their failed attempt to overthrow Bautista's government in 1953. History comes alive with a walking tour of this old prison. Museum is very nice to see and shows a lot of history of the men who led various uprisings in Cuba. Many artefacts. Can only be reached by coach.

Criadero de los cocodrilos; A place to watch the rare Cuban crocodiles, a species threatened with extinction. You can see from babies to adults aged over 60 years.

Santiago De Cuba



It takes a while before you are given clearance to disembark.

There is a Police escort all the way for all the trips, traffic held up for our coaches and given priority at local banks to change money,

The trip to the mountains was excellent and the guides speak excellent English and are very knowledgeable . You visited the farm house, now a museum, where Fidel Castro stayed during the first failed revolution. It is an interesting

museum however and the guides are good at translating the Spanish information into English. This is followed by a somewhat hairy drive up the mountain where you are treated to spectacular views, however, you need to climb up nearly 500 steps to reach the top. Then on to visit a working botanical garden. You have to scramble along dodgy paths and through bushes. Totally unspoilt and really enjoyable, the gardener speaks very good English and knew all the English names of the plants as well as the Latin ones. Then back into town for a panoramic tour and a visit to the original Bacardi factory for rum tasting and entertainment.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Amber Cove



The Caribbean's newest destination.

Amber Cove is located on the Bay of Maimon near Puerto Plata in the country's North Coast. Puerto Plata is better known for its Atlantic coastline with more than 60 miles (100km) of beaches, coastal villages and hotels. The beach towns of Sosua and Cabarete, would famous for its windsurfing and kiteboarding, are less than half an hour away.

Upon arrival, guests will disembark to a broad concrete pier and walk through an entrance built to resemble the gates of a Caribbean fortress. The security post leads to the duty-free concession which will include a unique focus on Caribbean rums. It is about a 10 minute walk from the berth.

The cruise port includes a waterfront welcome centre; a recreational area with a pool, water park and green spaces; waterfront cabanas; a hilltop bar and observation point.

There is a large shallow pool area with hundreds of beach chair's around it, free sun beds but the large brollies were USD\$8. It also features a large water slide. There is a zipline overhead, this was \$12 unlimited use. In that same section are seven over-the-water cabanas available for private rental, along with a "quiet" pier bar. The cabanas are \$250-a-day. The rock is topped by Bar 360, which features panoramic views of the port and cove from a 75-foot elevation. Plenty of helpful, friendly staff flogging drinks and food. Beer was pricey at USD\$5 per bottle or USD\$20 for 5.

A shopping, entertainment and food plaza is arranged in a long oval of buildings that echo various architectural styles found in the Dominican Republic, including Victorian, Colonial and Fortaleza.

The retail will be a mix of familiar cruise port names and local vendors selling Dominican crafts and souvenirs; plus multiple food and beverage options.

Suggestions

Try the mighty truck tour this is recommended, good fun with a cracking beach at the other end of the island. The popular Ocean World Adventure Park is on the outskirts of the city, about 20 minutes north of Amber Cove. Damajagua Falls is just a 30 minute ride south.

You can swim with dolphins, stingrays — and yes, even sharks! — at Ocean World.

Explore Fort San Felipe, originally built to ward off pirates, which today welcomes curious travellers of all kinds.

This spot is known for its remarkable local amber — actually the clearest you'll find anywhere in the world. Walk the famed Malecón, a three-mile-long open air beach-side boardwalk dotted with bars, restaurants and shops.

Damajaqua Cascades (27 waterfalls)

Brugal operates a sizable rum factory in the city, which also features a small, 16th century fort.

Cruise Destinations

Try a local tour. Private mini bus with wifi and visit all the main sites (town center, amber museum, fort, beach and cable car, \$8pp highly recommended with botanical gardens included at the top. Go before noon as cloud descends most days after Noon. US\$70 for a couple.

Excursions

The P&O 'Traditions and Culture Tour' is very good, £46pp and includes lunch, a tour of the city, plus a visit to a chocolate factory and lots more. Lunch is at a plantation with entertainment by musicians and dancers.

Beaches

There is a local beach visible from the ship but people have said it is not very good.

Catalina Island



Located a 20 minute boat ride away from La Romana Harbour in the southeast coast of the Dominican Republic, Catalina is a jewel of an island famed for its lovely beaches, laid-back atmosphere and sensational diving and snorkelling.

This is THE place to flop on the beach and get your snorkel mask out; its shallow waters are home to a dazzling array of brightly coloured sealife, including purple sea fans, orange, brown and grey garden fish; Catalina's warm clear waters are also a good place for spotting larger fish, including grouper.

La Romana



La Romana is a city on the Dominican Republic's Caribbean coast.

La Romana town itself offers up miniature haciendas, cigar shops and noisy street markets - not to mention a plush, restaurant-packed marina. plazas.

Suggestions

Altos de Chavon; All this area is inspired in ancient Italy. Absolutely beautiful. They have restaurants, souvenir shops, a beautiful view and great food. The amphitheatre is breath-taking.

Regional Museum of Archaeology; Small (free) museum on the history of the peoples of the Dominican Republic located in the Altos de Chavon village.

Note: I found this on Trip Advisor, We visited from a cruise ship docking in La Romana. There are no shuttles from the port to Altos de Chavon. There are taxis. They cost \$30 round trip plus \$6 each additional person. \$20 one way. If you do round trip the taxi will wait an hour for you to explore. It costs \$5 per person to enter Altos de Chavon.

Candidly, we paid a total of \$50 including transportation and it definitely wasn't worth it. Don't get me wrong, it is gorgeous and has some wonderful views, as well as being great architecturally. I just don't think it is worth that much to travel there and walk around unguided. There are also no placards describing what you're seeing. Overall, it was nice but I wouldn't bother unless it's part of a bigger package trip.

Cruise Destinations

Just along the coast, meanwhile, is the Dominican Republic's star turn - its capital, Santo Domingo. First settled by Christopher Columbus, its 16th-century old quarter is like a pop-up history book, with cobbled streets, ornate Spanish churches and café-lined

Further up the road is the Capital of Dominica Republic - Santo Domingo.

Santo Domingo



Santo Domingo is the capital of the Dominican Republic and one of the Caribbean's oldest cities. Its walled, cobblestoned historic core, the Zona Colonial, has buildings that date to the 1500s.

Amid the cobblestone streets, it would be easy to forget Santo Domingo is in the Caribbean. But this is an intensely urban city, home not only to colonial-era architecture, but also to hot clubs, vibrant cultural institutions and elegant restaurants.

Suggestions

The 3 Eyes National Park; A pretty cheap activity that last about a hour or so. There are about 60 steep steps leading Down into the cave system. Which is the only access so if you have mobility issues I would advise against visiting.

Catedral Primada de America; This is a must visit historical place in Santo Domingo. It is recommended that you get the recorded guided tour to get all the information about the cathedral and the chapels within it.

Parque Colon; Nice town square. Lot's a little shops around. Get a coffee or an ice cream and enjoy the local life.

Chu Chu Colonial; Hop in and enjoy this ride. Nice train to get around the colonial zone. Very recommended. Drive around the key places within this historical zone.

GUATEMALA

Santo Tomas de Castilla



Located in the eastern Gulf of Honduras coast on the Amatique Bay, Santo Tomas De Castilla was originally settled by 19th century Belgian pioneers, and is an excellent place from which to explore the famous Mayan ruins of Quiriguá. Whilst not the largest Mayan site of significance, Quiriguá retains some of the finest sculptures from ancient Mesoamerica.

As the attractions for cruise passengers in the area are very limited, Santo Tomás de Castilla serves mainly as a cruise passenger's gateway to the inland attractions.

Safety Advice: High murder rates mark Guatemala as one of the most dangerous countries in the Western Hemisphere. While the vast majority of murders do not involve foreigners, we recommend that you be extremely careful. Only travel with authorized tour groups and stay in well-lit, public areas. Only take the cash that you need and keep your passports and jewelry locked up on the cruise ship.

Suggestions

For security reasons, it is recommended you do not take any self-guided excursions in Guatemala.

HAITI

Labadee



Labadee is a port located on the northern coast of Haiti. It is a private resort leased to Royal Caribbean Cruises.

It has an undulating coastline creating a series of lagoon-like bays, all protected by a reef. A typical day in port may include snorkelling, filling up a plate or two at the all-you-can eat BBQ, zipping across the water on the 2,600-foot-long Dragon's Breath Flight Line or snoozing soundly in a beach chair.

It has glorious beaches and amazing crystal clear water. Jump in and it's warm and salty, absolutely wonderful. There is a flea market with the local crafts, nothing made in China, but all by local artisans.

HONDURAS

Roatan



Roatán is the largest and most developed of the Bay Islands. Long and thin (50km long but only 2km to 4km wide), the island is a real diving and snorkelling mecca - virtually its entire coastline is fringed by an astonishingly diverse coral reef teeming with tropical fish.

But there's much more to Roatán than its reef. Exquisite white sand beaches like West Bay, a mountainous interior of pine-forested hills and the remote wild east of the

island (once a key pirate hangout) beg to be explored.

From zip lining to deep sea fishing to exploring the military-protected archipelago of Cayos Cochinos, the Honduran island of Roatan is a playground for lovers of water sports and ecotourism. Landlubbers will flip for the Carambola Botanical Gardens, a tour of the Stone Castle Cameo Factory or exploring the beaches on horseback.

It is recommended you do not venture out in the town.

First a warning. This was 2014: Norwegian Cruise Line cancelled all cruises to this port following one of its crew members being shot dead in what has been described as the "latest and most shocking in a series of violent reported incidents affecting visitors to the island." A string of reports of robberies, violence against visitors and now this horrific murder have forced us to suspend our cruise excursion programme on this beautiful island," a spokesman said.

Suggestions

Try a private tour with Island Marketing, 30 dollars each for the day. You get a private driver who will take you to exactly where you want. Try a visit to Dan Johnsons monkey sanctuary, the iguana farm and then onto Parrot Bay private resort for a break. It is 16 dollars extra for entrance to the two animal parks.

Otherwise there are basically three things to do on your visit to Roatan. Scuba diving and snorkelling are what brings most folks to the island, owing to the large number of excellent reef sites that are situated around the island. Dozens of world-class diving and snorkelling sites are accessible from sandy white beaches around the island and through numerous operators, congregated on West End village, the hub of the island's activity.

Cruise Destinations

You can also do some fishing in the waters surrounding Roatan, where the local catch includes marlin, tuna and wahoo.

And lastly, the water sports on Roatan include kayaking, sailing, water-skiing and wake-boarding are popular activities. Then again, you can just hang out on the bucolic beaches.

Trujillo



Trujillo is a city and a municipality on the northern Caribbean coast of the Honduran department of Colón, of which the city is the capital.

Trujillo, Honduras is a relatively new cruise destination and, as such, is not as clean and tidy as some people might like. The town centre is, however, very interesting and gives a true insight in to the daily lives of the local population. Once outside of the town, don't expect the roads to be good - they are quite bad (narrow, rutted and pot-holed) and the

area is distressingly littered with plastic bags and bottles. There is not much infrastructure in the town for tourists, but the area is scenic and the locals are friendly.

Suggestions

Fort de Santa Barbara; The fort itself is rather rundown, but there are some great views along the coast.

Campo del Mar Nature Park; try and visit and you are in for a real treat. There are pleasant facilities - toilets, a restaurant, a small pool and the beach and sea. The reserve itself is divided in to 4 areas - agricultural, botanical, animals and the beach area. There is a little train, with guide, to take you round the first three of these or you can wander at will.

JAMAICA

From the various posts I have found regarding Jamaica some say: Jamaica is one of the most beautiful islands in the Caribbean. However, others say: Jamaica is one of the most dangerous islands in the Caribbean. Jamaica does seem to get a lot of bad publicity, maybe because it is a large island. However, if you go off the beaten track you may feel a little threatened.

I did find one comment from a Jamaican national on one cruise forum. He said "*Jamaica is a beautiful island, very diverse in its tropical beauty if one as the time to explore. A lot is needed to be done in terms of the attitude of some of the locals in and around the port area, which can be very intimidating to a foreigner, which in turn does not help the island tourism. Also the towns and buildings along main route can be at times an eye sore, no one on holiday wants to see poverty. I'm not been unpatriotic, one as to tell it, as it is.*"

Montego Bay and Ochos Rios



Montego Bay is located on Jamaica's northwest coast and is the islands most popular resort. Montego Bay or 'Mo' Bay' as the relaxed locals call it, offers everything from great beaches to duty free shopping, and it is also your gateway to historical and natural attractions further afield.

A Spanish colony in the 1500's and a primary sugar port during the epoch of slavery in the 17th and 18th century, it has an interesting past. Visit one of the colonial houses such as Rose Hall. Formerly the home of Annie Palmer, known as the 'White Witch of Rose Hall', this plantation house still evokes memories of her monstrous reign as mistress.

Cruise Destinations

Ocho Rios is one of the island's most beautiful towns and is far better located for Jamaica's best known attractions. Its name is a corruption of the Spanish for waterfalls, so it is no surprise that, Dunns River Falls, is close by.

Also close by is a large colourful craft market where the haggling is as much fun as the buying. Equally colourful are the Shaw Park botanical gardens on the outskirts of town. A must-see is Sir Noel Cowards house, 'Firefly', which has superb views over Port Maria while another famous former local resident, Errol Flynn, is reputed to have invented one of the most popular Jamaican excursions - rafting. This involves sitting back on a bamboo raft just big enough for two passengers as a languid Jamaican slowly punts it down the Martha Brae river.

Errol Flynn, Ian 'James Bond' Fleming and Noel Coward had two key things in common: they all enjoyed the good things in life and they all chose to spend many years of their lives in Jamaica. The two were definitely connected.

Now the distance between the two is about 100Km, 1hr 45 mins. So, plan well.

Another port of call could be Falmouth. Falmouth is the chief town and capital of the parish of Trelawny in Jamaica. It is situated on Jamaica's north coast 18 miles east of Montego Bay. It is noted for being one of the Caribbean's best-preserved Georgian towns.

Suggestions

There are lots of places to see in Jamaica. The Blue Mountains, the blue lagoon, numerous falls and rivers, including Dunns River Falls.

For Dunns River Falls then head to Ocho Rios, its name is a corruption of the Spanish for waterfalls, so it is no surprise that Jamaica's best known attraction, Dunns River Falls, is close by. The idea is to walk up this pretty waterfall cascading straight into the Caribbean before joining the reggae and rum beach party below.

If you are thinking about Dunns River Falls then do not think that this is going to be an easy walk up a water fall. This is definitely a CLIMB! And make sure you take your water shoes with you.

Book a day pass at Secrets Wild Orchid Resort. You have full use of this luxury resort with a taxi each way included and as much to eat and drink as you want. Fabulous.

When going through the market make sure you put your head down and keep walking. If you stop and look you will never get away without buying something. The in traders in Jamaica are very intimidating!

Tour Operators

For the independent tourist then try a highly recommended local excursion provider called Peat Taylor. Web site: <http://www.ochoriosjamaicatours.com/> He will email clear instructions of where to meet and responds swiftly to any email. You need to pay in full in advance.

Excursions

The ships tour in Ochos Rios to Dunnes Falls included a zip wiring and many who took this thought it was great value for money.

If you are into music then a visit Nine Miles, the birth and resting place of reggae legend Bob Marley is a must. P&O do run a trip here but it is usually sold out months ahead of the cruise so if you want to do this independently.

The P&O 'Cool Runnings' catamaran trip to the Falls, up the Falls and music and rum on the way back is a great trip

Cruise Destinations

P&O do a 'Plantation House' tour £36pp and is classed as OK. The cruiser mentioned that others who did the Dunns River tour without doing the climb had a great time and saw much more than they did.

Beaches

If you don't want to go far from the ship. Go over to Margaritavilla (on the right). It has a little beach and sunbeds. This area is safe. They have security in the shops and the bar. Do not go to the town beach on the left of the dock

If you are looking for beautiful white sands, head to one of the best spots in town, Doctor's Cave Beach. With its clear turquoise waters and surrounding landscape of picturesque low mountains, it is a real sun seekers paradise. Alternatively, glide down the miles of flourishing forest on a raft ride down the Martha Brae River.

For Jamaica then I guess the best advice would be to go on an organised tour, by staying on the ship you would miss out on so much.

MEXICO

Costa Maya



This newly created Mexican cruise port opened in 2000 and is close to the border with Belize. If you build it, they will come. Costa Maya, located on a peninsula along Mexico's Caribbean coast, about 100 miles south of Playa del Carmen, feels like a private island created from scratch expressly for cruisers. That's because it was; developers created the port terminal/faux village complex not far from the Belize border solely to woo cruise lines, and everything -- from the manmade malecon, a beachfront

pedestrian path in nearby Mahahual, to the beach club used for shore excursions -- has been created with passengers in mind.

The port itself, features myriad facilities in its village -- pools, restaurants, brand-name bars such as Carlos 'n Charlie's, shops, a dolphin experience and a small beach (though it's too rocky to swim). The port developers also own a club and water sports area on Uvero Beach, which is actually away from the terminal and is typically used by cruise lines as a shore-excursion option. Besides the amenities that tourists see, developers took care of the essentials outside the village -- brick-paved roads, concrete cottages for employees, who all come from elsewhere, and a water-sanitation system. (Yes, it is safe to drink water within the Costa Maya confines.)

Beyond that, the folks who created Costa Maya also invested in and remade Mahahual (also known as Majahual), a one-time fishing village of 200 people that's about a 30-minute walk or \$5 cab ride away. An attractive malecon anchors a row of seaside hotels, restaurants, dive shops and beach clubs that serve fresh ceviche and offer water activities along lovely white sand beaches with shallow surf (perfect for families). Although development is restricted to low-rise buildings, Mahahual's growth has attracted a small group of entrepreneurs, including a sizable Italian community, interested in making the town the "next Tulum."

For travelers who just want to get into the "don't worry, be happy" mindset, the lure of the area's beach clubs can pretty much consume the day. Those who want to venture further have intriguing options, too.

The region is home to some lesser-known (but still important) Mayan ruins. The site most cruise passengers come here to see is Chacchoben, a city dating to around 350 A.D.; some excursions focus solely on Mayan food and culture. Bacalar lagoon offers kayaking and swimming in the Cenote Azul, and there's also a Spanish fortress you can tour. While Costa Maya might look sleepy at a glance, there's something for everyone in this corner of the Caribbean -- and it only keeps growing.

Cruise Destinations

Best of all, there is a swimming pool, bungee trampolines and small beach area with a water-polo pool, hammocks, showers and massage rooms. The area around Costa Maya offers a fascinating mixture of jungle, wetland, coastal dunes, and coral reefs with the bonus of a variety of Mayan sites. The closest is Chacchoben, a lost Mayan city that has only been partially uncovered from the jungle and whose most important discovery to date is a fascinating single pyramid.

If you are looking for some inspiration try here: <https://costamayacruiseexcursions.com/>

Cozumel



Cozumel, a mostly undeveloped Mexican island in the Caribbean Sea, is a popular cruise ship port of call famed for its scuba diving, but unless you are going to tourist traps, the island never feels overcrowded.

Cozumel Mexico is very famous for its diving and snorkelling because of the magnificent coral reefs that are only a short distance from the shore.

The Other Side of Cozumel (East side of Cozumel & also known as the "Wild Side") has 7 miles of secluded ocean & beach front that is absolutely breath-taking. If you are looking to get the most out of Cozumel in a single day, the other side of Cozumel (East Side) is the perfect place to enjoy gorgeous deserted beaches, off-road jungle terrain, blowholes, and hidden water caves, beach bars/restaurants, hatching baby sea turtles, snorkelling, rock formations and much more.

Cozumel has a dock and you walk right off the ship and into a terminal full of tourist shops and bars.

Suggestions

Outside the port there is a taxi stand and a sign with rates to go from there to whatever beach or other location. It is quite safe to just grab a cab and head out to places like Mr. Sancho's, Paradise Beach, there are many of them. Cabs are always either waiting by these beaches for the return of the staff will be happy to call one for you.

Try taking the local ferry across to the mainland. (Playa del Carmen). The taxi to the port cost \$8 total and the ferry \$10 each way.

Punta Sur Park is at the southern tip of Isla Cozumel, and offers an amazing exploration of Cozumel's most spectacular ecological reservation.

San Gervasio Ruins; This Mayan complex is Cozumel's preserved ruins'. San Gervasio is thought to have been the site of the sanctuary of Ixchel, goddess of fertility, and thus an important pilgrimage site at which Maya women worshipped.

For something different try the Hummer Stretch Limo tour. \$30pp.

Progreso



Progreso, located on the northwest coast of Mexico's Yucatan peninsula, is a regular port of call on Western Caribbean itineraries, particularly those leaving from New Orleans and Texas ports. The port city of Progreso is famous for its 7km wharf, the longest in Mexico and reputedly the world.

The climate is typically Caribbean or "tropical" with high temps and high humidity. Temperatures range between 80 and 95 degrees. Hats, bottled water and sunscreen are musts when sightseeing in the region, while mosquito repellent and good walking shoes will make the trip more pleasant.

Along the mile-long main promenade you'll find a bustling scene popular with locals, who come to enjoy the beach with its fine white sand and emerald green sea and it is equipped with an abundance of water sports activities. Take a seat at one of the many thatched-roof restaurants or palapas, and enjoy some distinctive Yucatan cuisine such as seafood soup, fish cooked in banana leaves or, for the more adventurous; ceviche de chivitas (river snail).

Other attractions include cooling off in a cenote (a natural sinkhole) or just sampling a shot of the licorice-flavored native drink, Xtabentun.

From Progreso visit the fascinating Mayan ruins at Chichen Itza and Uxmal, which offer an enthralling glimpse into the ancient, pre-Hispanic past of the Yucatan peninsula. There are 2,040 Mayan sites in the state of Yucatan, of which only a tiny fraction have been excavated and restored.

Cruise visitors can also take advantage of the port's proximity to the charming colonial city of Merida, a 30-minute bus ride away. Merida offers historic ambience, shopping that ranges from boutiques to bazaars, and plenty of restaurants and cafes. It's often called "The White City" for its light buildings and the white clothing originally worn by locals. Named for Merida, Spain, the city was built in 1542 on the Mayan site of Ti'ho and designed around the Plaza Grande, flanked on all sides by some of the city's most important buildings.

PANAMA

Colon



Colón is a Panamanian city and sea port beside the Caribbean Sea, lying near the Atlantic entrance to the Panama Canal.

Colón is a historical port city on the Caribbean coast of Panama. It is the capital of the province of Colon and the Caribbean entrance to the Canal. Its natural resources, such as coral reefs and forest reserves are being developed and promoted as tourist attractions. It is about 50 miles northwest of Panama City.

Suggestions

Gatun Locks; Truly amazing the engineering and how over the years it still works. Really big ships going through with almost no room to spare. The train engines which pull them through a new up dated based on the same concept as the original.

Fort San Lorenzo; Panama's National Treasure and they protect it. Old Spanish style fort at mouth of Chagres River, with views of ocean, river and jungle. You will see some animals--monkeys, etc on the road to it.

Cruise Destinations

Panama Canal Railway; You only get glimpses of the Panama Canal but it's a nice journey through the jungle where it becomes more interesting around Gatun Lake. This is a bus down to Panama City and the train back to Colon. It is offered as an organised tour from most cruise ships.

Cristobal



Cristobal is a port city that resides at the entrance of Limon Bay that leads to the entrance to the eastern side of the Panama Canal. Many ships cruising to the Panama Canal simply enter the locks and then are raised up to Gatun Lake where they then tender folks ashore for their shore excursions.

Those that do not take a shore excursion, generally stay aboard to retrace their steps back down the locks and then to Cristobal. Some ships do not enter the locks at all, but simply start their shore excursions in Cristobal.

Cristobal itself is not much to look at and there is limited shopping in the city.

Suggestions

The ship docks at Cristobal Pier in Cristobal. It is not suggested that you try to walk into town from the pier, but rather take a taxi to where you want.

The Flea Market in the Cristobal Cruise Terminal; there is limited shopping in Cristobal, but the pier itself houses a huge shopping complex and flea market. Local crafts from various Indian groups that reside in Panama including the Cuna Indians.. Hand weaved baskets, wood carvings, shell and silver jewellery and souvenirs are plentiful. There are also several stores in the complex selling perfumes, clothing, pharmaceuticals and more. The Cuna Indian molas are very collectible. Molas are fabric designs made from various colors of cloth to create a multi-coloured unique picture that is worth framing.

Sightseeing Along the Panama Canal; of course, the main draw of a port call at Cristobal is to visit the Panama Canal. There are several ways to do this. Most ships offer a partial cruise through the canal that you may book. The train that traverses the canal is also an excellent way to see the entire canal. Finally, a motor coach tour of the canal that includes Panama City is also an excellent way to experience all the canal has to offer

PUERTO RICO

San Juan



San Juan is the capital and most populous city in Puerto Rico. Five centuries ago, San Juan was an impenetrable fortified city, today is considered one of the most welcoming and culturally rich destinations. Visitors are captivated by the enchantment of the island, its culture, the Old World wonders of Old San Juan, the amenities and entertainment of a modern city, and the tropical allures of a Caribbean destination.

San Juan, capital city of Puerto Rico, is actually two distinct destinations that are five centuries apart, creating one of the most unique and easily accessible places to travel under the U.S. Flag. San Juan, the second oldest city in the New World, is a vibrant, warm, sunny, and happy place both day and night.

Old San Juan: The charming Old San Juan will transport you back to colonial times. Bring comfortable shoes, because you'll want to walk every cobblestone street, with bright candy coloured homes. Explore scenic waterfronts, century old forts, museums, charming plazas, excellent restaurants, shopping, and be sure to experience our vibrant culture by attending our festive events just about every week of the year.

Cruise Destinations

New San Juan, The New San Juan, the metropolis of the Caribbean, is constantly growing and moving forward. Our capital city offers the amenities and entertainment of a modern and lively city with the added allures of tropical beaches, luxurious beachfront hotels, world-class dining, shopping, and a sizzling nightlife. Condado, Ocean Park, nearby Isla Verde, are the most popular tourist destinations. Here you can have it all, a bustling city life yet relaxing like a tropical escape ought to be.

Suggestions

Old San Juan provides a free trolley service to get you around the city. The trolley runs every day Monday through Friday from 7am until 6 pm, and Saturday and Sunday from 9am until 7pm every 15 minutes. Most of the trolleys are accessible for wheelchairs and mobility devices and identified with the blue International Symbol of Accessibility.

The Parque de las Palomas (Pigeon Park) is located near the Paseo de la Princesa, next to Capilla del Cristo at the end of Cristo Street. This park overlooks the restored La Princesa Jail, now a government office with an attractive art gallery. It is the perfect spot from which to enjoy a magnificent view of the harbor, city and mountains. It is also a great choice for families with small children; kids will enjoy interacting with the local pigeons.

The Luis Muñoz Rivera Park is an spacious ocean side park with large trees, landscape gardens and wide walks, located on Jesús T. Piñero Avenue. Open Tues-Sun 9:00am - 5:00pm.

San Felipe del Morro Fort was named in honour of King Phillip II, commonly known as El Morro, is a 16th-century citadel. The word itself sounds powerful and this six-level fortress certainly is.

Castillo de San Cristóbal (San Cristóbal Fort) is El Morro's partner in the city's defence. Built in 1634 (completed in 1771), was considered the Gibraltar of the West Indies.

Old San Juan has several plazas: Plaza de San José is a favourite meeting place for young and old alike. Plaza San José is the Plaza del Quinto Centenario (Quincentennial Square), this plaza is the cornerstone of Puerto Rico's commemoration of the 500th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of the New World. Plaza de Armas (Arms Square) is Old San Juan's main square, on San José Street. Features four statues representing the four seasons; all are over 100 years old. Plaza de Colón (Columbus Square) was originally called St. James Square was renamed in 1893 to honour Christopher Columbus on the 400th anniversary of his discovery. Plazuela de la Rogativa (Plaza of Religious Procession) was built in 1971. The Plaza de Hostos is located near La Casita, features artisan displays, snack stands, and traditional piragüeros, who sell shaved ice topped with tropical fruit syrup.

Beaches

Escambron Beach: The best beach in the capital city of San Juan located in Puerta de Tierra, right in between Old San Juan & Condado. Here at Escambron you can enjoy swimming waters, snorkelling, sights of a historic site, sweeping views of Condado and Old San Juan and great food.

Condado Beach: Condado beach is not only beautiful, but also fun with wave action as well as water sport activities just a few steps away.

Playa Peña: A little gem right in the Old City of San Juan. Take a short walk down the steps and enjoy Playa Peña (Rock Beach).

EASTERN COAST OF THE ATLANTIC

USA (NORTH)

Baltimore



Baltimore is a major city in Maryland with a long history as an important seaport. Fort McHenry, birthplace of the U.S. national anthem, "The Star-Spangled Banner," sits at the mouth of Baltimore's Inner Harbour.

Since the redevelopment of the Inner Harbour in the late 1970s a good part of the city's action centres around the fun and festive Harbour area, where street entertainers, open-air concerts, fireworks and parades abound, the surrounding neighbourhoods offer all sorts of interesting

landmarks, unique shops and delicious restaurants.

Charm City is one of the top tourist destinations in the United States.

Suggestions

Fort McHenry National Monument; This is run by the National Park Service and is not as popular as many other Parks, but should be put on your "must do list". Only \$10pp and you can spend about 2 hours walking around the grounds. There is a great 10 minute movie that gives you an overview of events at the park.

Fell's Point; Awesome Neighbourhood, Great view of the Harbour. It is the first stop on the Water Taxi from the inner Harbour. There is usually a Festival going on in the summer. Check out the whole area, tons of bars and seafood restaurants.

Washington Monument and Mount Vernon Place; This is an area surrounded by interesting and important buildings. This is the oldest Washington Monument in the country. The Mount Vernon area of Baltimore once housed the wealthy of the city. It is still beautiful and probably expensive. The row houses are enormous and you can tour the Engineers Club and get an idea of how large these houses were.

Bar Harbour, Maine



One of the most popular New England cruise ports, Bar Harbour has something of the look of Old England about it with visions of Cornwall evoked by the rugged coastal walk below its craggy, granite cliffs. But Main Street is classic small town America, full of stores where staff know all the locals by their first-name and bars which are packed with hunting, shooting and fishing trophies.

The cruise dock is right in the centre of the town, too, so take a stroll and maybe try one of the locally-caught Maine

lobsters which are on every restaurant menu - then learn more about your meal at the Maine Lobster Museum and Hatchery. Bar Harbour is on an island (Mount Desert) connected by bridge to the mainland and in the middle of the Acadia National Park - an intoxicating mix of lakes, forests and mountains. Look out for towering Cadillac Mountain and Thunder Hole where the ocean thunders against the cliffs. This is one of those places you can just walk. Some say it reminded them of where 'Murder she Wrote' is set. There was a HOHO bus for the more leisurely tour.

Cruise Destinations

Suggestions

Acadia National Park is a must and it is one of the most visited national parks in the country. You can see otters and eagles amongst other animals, then to the club for a Lobster Dinner, afterwards just a stroll and shop,

For a DIY of here try a trolley tour on Oli's Trolley which takes you to the park. Cadillac Mountain is a major attraction in the park. www.olistrolley.com

Boston, Massachusetts



Historic Boston is a key cruise port for 'fall foliage' trips around New England and the Canadian Maritime Provinces but anytime is a good time to enjoy this friendly, walkable city - dubbed 'The Cradle of Liberty' for its part in the American War of Independence.

Learn its fascinating history by following the Freedom Trail or take a subway ride beneath the Charles River to Cambridge, home of the 400-year-old Harvard University. On the other hand, you could simply settle for some world class

shopping and lunch with a view of street entertainers at one of the pavement restaurants in the leafy lanes which surround pretty Quincy Market.

Or spend your day exploring the city's neighbourhoods; Back Bay - filled with elegant boulevards and imposing brownstone mansions - is the trendiest district while North End displays Boston's colonial charm at its best.

Suggestions

A fantastic city and very clean. Take the shuttle bus into town and walk through the Quincy Market which has an amazing array of food.

Lots of history which the locals are proud of. History centres on the Americans defeating the English and the Boston tea party but it no way reflects the attitude of the locals who love the Brits

You can try the Freedom Trail. It is actually a very good trail and worth doing either on your own or a guided walking tour and they seem to run a number of them throughout the day. There are two other walking tours, the Black History tour and the Harvard College tour.

Some thought the Salem witch museum very disappointing and the gift shop abysmal. Never the less the scenery was interesting as was Salem itself.

Newport, Rhode Island



Fabulous mansions, fantastic scenery and the world famous ten mile Ocean Drive make Newport, Rhode Island a must see city. From the splendour of its palatial 'summer cottages' to its quaint colonial streets, inviting vineyards and numerous marinas.

For a glimpse into gilded age living, visit Breakers - the most opulent and elegant mansion renowned for its intricate art and craftsmanship, or marvel at Marble Cottage - a social and architectural landmark and the first of Newport's grand

residences. Both are laced with endless carpets of green lawn and beautifully manicured gardens.

Cruise Destinations

Miles of scenic coastline give it a rugged beauty ideal for sailing, riding and rejuvenating walks. For true nature lovers Newport's sanctuaries display a wide variety of bird life and for those who want to simply relax lagoon-like Gooseberry beach is the perfect location. Other famous landmarks include Trinity Church, Redwood Library and the Gothic Church of St. Mary's - where Jacqui and JFK were married.

This is a tender port and very welcoming.

Suggestions

There is a centre where you can arrange your own coach trips, including the HOHO bus. There is a nice harbour with shopping and many restaurants and cafes, or just sit and watch the yachts in the bay. Lovely place just to relax.

Newport Rhode Island with its summer cottages. There are tours of the "cottages" with some actually visiting one.

If inclined you could visit to St Mary's Church, where Jacqueline Lee Bouvier and John F. Kennedy were married on Sept 12, 1953, however, it is only open from 9 till midday.

New York



The 'Big Apple' is the USA's most charismatic city and really does have something for everyone. Love the great outdoors? Stroll through the gorgeous gardens of Central Park, right in the centre of Manhattan.

People-watching more your thing? Get a taste of local life in the quaint cafés of bohemian Greenwich Village, or star spot in the boutique and restaurant-lined streets of the sophisticated SoHo and TriBeCa districts.

Feast your eyes at the Metropolitan Museum of Art or enjoy the shopping spree of your life at Saks, Macys, Bloomingdales or Century 21 on Cortlandt Street, which is the worlds largest discount warehouse and near that other must-see, Broadway.

The sail into New York is special, so get on top for the views. The looming Manhattan skyline will come into view and when you first see the Statue of Liberty it will look rather small but close up its a lot bigger than you think.

Getting off the ship is fun; there will be a number of officials who will go through your documentation. So make sure you have your completed ESTA approval paperwork handy, this will make the process quicker for them to go through. Then you have your fingerprints taken on an electronic piece of equipment, also your picture is taken as well.

If you are berthing in Port of Bayonne (Cape Liberty) it is just across the Hudson River to New York, about 10 miles by car/taxi.

Suggestions

What you can do will depend a lot on how long you are there. So, some ideas.

Metro is very easy to use as is the bus. You cannot pay cash on bus (or train) so get a ticket before you travel. \$30 gets you unlimited travel on subway and bus for 7 days.

Cruise Destinations

The views from the top of the Rockefeller Centre are a lot better than the Empire State Building, and usually a lot less queues. It is much more relaxed and you can sit around up there for as long as you wish. The lift ride is very quick and the ceiling of the lift is clear Perspex showing you going up the shaft of the lift. The view from the top is amazing and what's more you get a great view of Central Park and of downtown Manhattan. There are three levels you can view from each one given you a different perspective and distance of what is in front of you.

If you do want to visit the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island you really need to book this online before you go or turn up very early to try and get a ticket on a first come first serve basis. However, if you just want a close up view of the statue then the Staten Island ferry is free of charge and you get a pretty good view of the Statue of Liberty.

The Empire State Building, at night - superb views, around half an hour to queue and go through security.

Central Park is massive and is very good and very peaceful considering it is in one of the most busy and populous cities. There are two zoos in the park. Battery Park, right at the tip of New York is quite nice with some great views.

The 9/11 Memorial is well worth a visit but you'll need to get a ticket (free) before you go and book a slot.

Grand Centre Station is quite simply an amazing looking station and worth a quick look.

The USS Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum is a great morning or afternoon out and the Space Shuttle exhibit is open now so well worth a look. There is also a cruise tour from right next door to here that takes you down the Hudson, close to the Statue of Liberty and then on to Brooklyn Bridge and back. Excellent commentary all the way.

Hoboken, NJ For a charming and captivating small town experience, you should definitely check out Hoboken in New Jersey. Only a few minutes drive away from Bayonne, Hoboken is across the Hudson River from lower Manhattan. It is characterized by quaint streets strewn with restaurants and cafes. Take a walk along River Street, or visit Washington Avenue for chic restaurants and hip cafes. Go to Willow Avenue where there are plenty of cute shops around where you can pick up souvenirs and gifts to take home with you.

Staten Island, Staten Island Ferry. Take a short drive from Bayonne to Staten Island. This island is full of culture and recreation. There over 170 parks, with swimming at South Park, horseback riding at Clay Pit Ponds Park or bird watching at the Mount Loretto Nature Preserve. There are three public golf courses, art galleries and historic sites. Visit one of the oldest forts in the United States, Fort Wadsworth, which has been guarding New York City for more than 200 years. Take a tour of Historic Richmond Town, a 17th century open air museum, which is like stepping back in time. Best of all, experience the Staten Island Ferry, which will take you for free across the river into Manhattan.

Liberty State Park, Less than 6 miles from Bayonne is the Liberty State Park. Sitting in the midst of the urban expanse that is northern New Jersey, the Liberty State Park stands as a welcome respite of natural beauty. Originally a major industrial area and an important transportation hub for New York, including the Central Railroad of New Jersey Terminal, which still stands in the north end of the park. The Liberty Science Center also within the park's perimeter is an especially entertaining attraction, with impressive science exhibits that everyone in the family is sure to appreciate. From the park, there is also a ferry which will take you to Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty on Liberty Island.

Cruise Destinations

Statue of Liberty, The Statue of Liberty has long been a representation of freedom and new beginnings, one of the sights millions of immigrants first saw when coming to America. Because it is such a tourist destination, reservations are needed in advance to climb to the viewing areas in either the statue pedestal or way at the top in the crown. Climbing the Crown rules: Photo ID is needed to enter and must match the name on the ticket, there is a max. of 4 reservations per order, children must be at least 4 feet tall, you can only take a camera (no case) and medication if needed (locker rentals are available with cash only), and you must be in good shape (377 stairs - no elevator). Pedestal Rules: to pick up tickets, the reservation holder must show photo id and the same credit card used to purchase the tickets. No food, drinks, backpacks or large camera bags are permitted. An elevator is available for part way, then stairs must be taken. See the website for more information. Ferries to the Statue of Liberty and Liberty Island depart from Liberty State Park in New Jersey and Battery Park in Manhattan.

Ellis Island, Ellis Island was the most active and largest immigration station in America, where more than 12 million immigrants came looking for a new life and opportunities. The Grand Hall is now the Ellis Island Immigration Museum and gives a voice to the immigrants and workers who spent time there. Unfortunately, due to the destruction from Hurricane Sandy, parts of the museum are still closed and while most the exhibits are available, the artefacts are still in storage. Hopefully this will be soon rectified. Ferries to Ellis Island depart from Liberty State Park in New Jersey and Battery Park in Manhattan.

And last but not least, for shopping try the area around Times Square.

Portland, Maine



A little slice of history, a larger slice of superb scenery and a seasoning of designer label bargain-packed factory outlet shopping - Portland in Maine has all the ingredients for the perfect New England cruise call.

Just north of Boston and nestling on a peninsula in the delightful Casco Bay, Portland is the ideal place just to go wandering. From the restored waterfronts eclectic mix of pubs, restaurants, galleries and arty-crafty boutiques to the fascinating Victorian architecture of the town centre, it is

as relaxing as it is entertaining. Just along the rugged coast at Cape Elizabeth is the world's oldest permanently-operating lighthouse - the 18th century Portland Headlight. As you might expect, the views are just spectacular

Suggestions

So much history, Casco Bay and many many lighthouses to view by land or sea. Portland is the birthplace of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

The town is split into two parts, one side is the Art area and the other is the Old Port.

A recommended tour is to Kennebunkport a beautiful town. You pass many towns with English names and the whole tour is very enjoyable.

There is free Wi-Fi in the local library. So, it is worth a visit.

If interested this port is famous for having the narrowest gauge railway.

USA (SOUTH)

Charleston



Nestled on South Carolina's Atlantic coast, the colonial port of Charleston is the oldest city in the state and claims to be one of America's loveliest. Originally an important seaport and major slave trading centre, today the cobblestone streets of Charleston's large downtown district are lined with tall, narrow houses flaunting ornate iron balconies, wooden shutters and shaded porches - timeless features of southern architecture.

Amongst piazzas and plantations, mansions that once belonged to wealthy colonial merchants masquerade as museums, with National Russell and Heywood-Washington House being two of the finest. Beauty exudes from the magnificent gardens of Magnolia and White Point, and after a carriage ride around the city pay a visit to Mount Pleasant or the area west of Ashley River.

Charleston Museum offers a unique insight into the city's history, and the fascinating spectacle of South Carolina Aquarium offers fabulous views over the harbour where Fort Sumter, a national monument commemorating the first shots of the American Civil War, stands proud.

Suggestions

There is such a lot to do in and around Charleston it is worth doing lots of research. However, some recommendations are:

Old South Carriage Ride. Travel by horse-drawn carriage along the picturesque streets of Charleston and take in the history of this South Carolina city. It lasts an hour and is a great way to see the city and learn its history. About £17+pp, (2014)

Walks In History. This is a 90-minute tour. You start at the Scottish cross pathways in the center of the original Charleston peninsula, Marion Square. About £11+pp (2014)

Key West



The vibrant resort and cruise port Key West is the southernmost of the string of Florida Keys so is just about as far south as you can travel in the USA. It is also just about the most laid-back, anything-goes place anywhere in this vast, diverse country.

It is unashamedly touristy but it is also proud of its history. Ernest Hemingway's restored house-turned-museum is a must for any visitor interested in literary history. Look out for the six-toed cats, descendants of the author's own, which still live there.

Key West is small and easy to stroll around with many lively bars offering live music, a range of shops and some superb restaurants serving the best steak and seafood. Duval Street is the main hub while the Bahamian Quarter provides a glimpse of a far more traditional way of life created by settlers from Cuba and the Bahamas.

Cruise Destinations

Suggestions

Everything offered by the cruise ships are easy do and cheaper on your own,

Try a scenic tour on the Conch Train. It travels through the old town passing historical sites including the sea ports and you will learn all about the town's heritage.

Ernest Hemingway Home and Museum. A beautiful Spanish colonial home where Ernest Hemingway lived with his second wife Pauline.

Sloppy Joe's. On December 5, 1933 — the very day that Prohibition was repealed — Joe Russell, a free-thinking speakeasy operator in the 1920s, opened what is now a Key West icon. The rowdy saloon bore the monikers 'Blind Pig' and 'Silver Slipper,' before Hemingway himself suggested 'Sloppy Joe's' (the name of another of Papa's favorite bars in Havana). Stop in for a delicious margarita, and stay for the live music."

Fort Zachary Taylor Historic State Park. A common misconception about Key West is that it is a beach destination. Although it is surrounded by water, there are actually extremely few beaches here. However, if you are craving a beach day, Fort Zachary Taylor State Park hits the spot with its soft sand and clear waters. Here you can visit the 1845 fort, explore nature trails, or snorkel in the waters surrounding the world's third largest coral reef." If you prefer snorkeling with professionals, there are many tours available in the old town; you can even book one that returns in the evening for a sunset cruise. Keep your eyes peeled for dolphins! Equipment for various water sports is available for rent if you want to get out on the water.

Southernmost Point. "No visit to Key West would be complete without visiting and having a photo taken with the Southernmost Point marker. Not only is this spot the southernmost point in the continental United States, but it's also notable for being only 90 miles away from Cuba.

Something out of the ordinary then visit the US 1 Mile Marker. This marks the southernmost point of U.S. Highway 1, which stretches 2,390 miles up to Fort Kent, Maine. Mile Marker 0 is literally the 'end of the road,' even though it's the center of town. Worth a stop-off if you're passing by. This might be a good time to bring your "selfie stick" in order to make sure you get a shot with you in it.

Mallory Square. Mallory Square is a stunning spot to watch the sunset, if you are there overnight or leave late. There are plenty of bars and cafes where you can grab a drink or a bite before heading to the square to see the sky light up in bright oranges, reds and yellows. This is an absolute must-see as every night is a spectacular light show

Miami



Miami, at Florida's southeastern tip, is a vibrant city whose Cuban influence is reflected in the cafes and cigar shops that line Calle Ocho in Little Havana. Miami Beach, on barrier islands across the turquoise waters of Biscayne Bay, is home to glamorous South Beach, famed for its colorful art deco buildings, white sand, surfside hotels and trendsetting nightclubs.

Suggestions

First stop South Beach. Arguably one of the best city beaches in the US, even on a sun soaked day you'll find plenty of room to sprawl.

Take a stroll along Ocean Drive and admire the colourful Art Deco architecture

Cruise Destinations

The Wolfsonian you'll find a historical treasure trove of American and European decorative art from 1885 to 1945,

Visit the Everglades, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Home to 14 rare and endangered species, explore the 'river of grass' on a traditional guided airboat tours.

If you are into History & Culture then;

The History Miami is one of the largest private, regional history museums in the southeast U.S. Housing more than 13,000 artifacts dating back to pre-Columbian times.

The Coral Gables Museum. This charming museum lets visitors explore permanent and traveling art and design exhibits,

The Jewish Museum of Florida. Explore more than 250 years of Jewish history in Florida

Patricia & Phillip Frost Museum of Science. If you love exhibits loaded with tons of interactive exploration, including a wildlife center, a sea lab, and a high Energy Dance Floor that captures energy and rockets you 10 feet in the air then you should visit here.

The Gold Coast Rail Museum is a one-of-a kind attraction and a must-see for train enthusiast and collectors. It houses a collection of more than 40 passenger cars, freight cars, locomotives and antique railway equipment.

Miami Auto Museum. This two building auto museum features 1,200 vintage to classic automobiles including the "Time Machine" from Back to the Future, Batmobiles as well as a fantastic array of James Bond automobiles, motorcycles, submarines, airplanes, helicopters, and gadgets.

Wings Over Miami Museum. This museum serves as a tribute to veterans, aviators and aircraft history. The museum houses several lovingly restored and maintained military and classic aircrafts.

Miami Guides: <http://www.miamiandbeaches.com/plan-your-trip/miami-guides>

Mobile



Mobile is a port city on Alabama's Gulf Coast. The WWII-era USS Alabama battleship is anchored in Battleship Memorial Park. Floats, costumes and photos at the Mobile Carnival Museum illuminate the city's centuries-old Mardi Gras tradition. The 1850 Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception features intricate German stained glass. International fine and decorative art is displayed at the Mobile Museum of Art.

Suggestions

Battleship USS ALABAMA; Walking onto this battleship is equivalent to going back in time. You begin to understand what it was like when sailors from WWII must have felt like when they first walked onto the ship.

Carnival Museum; The birthplace of Mardi Gras is Mobile and this museum is a great place to learn all about the beginning of Mardi Gras. They have the robes of the previous Kings and Queens of all the parades.

Cruise Destinations

Bragg-Mitchell Mansion; An elegant home with an interesting history. The guided tour of a wonderful Grand home has a story you must hear! The tour guide took us back in time to make you feel you were there living in the home to experience the way of life to be living there.

National Maritime Museum; This museum is loaded with fun educational and interactive displays for all ages. It is on multiple levels but there is an elevator and a ramp to all levels. Allow plenty of time as there is lots of hands on. Very modern and unlike other "museums". Perfect for families. There is a simulator to captain a ship.

New Orleans



With its atmospheric French Quarter, New Orleans oozes character quite unlike any other American city or cruise port. It is the sort of place where anything seems to go - that is why Americans love to call it the "Big Easy".

Its melting pot of influences; African, French and Caribbean, give this city on the Mississippi River a unique vibrancy, not least after dark when the music clubs and bars strike up with authentic jazz and blues sounds.

Preservation Hall is only the best known of its many late-night music haunts. The diverse cultural mix also adds spice to its famous Creole and Cajun cuisine.

Although a relatively small city, especially by US standards, walking will not get you around all of its sights so why not climb on board one of its historic streetcars, the oldest continuously operating system in the world?

Jackson Square in the heart of the Vieux Carre (French Quarter) is a good daytime starting point to explore the area's late 18th century houses with their magnolia-draped balconies and hidden courtyards.

Suggestions

One excursion to think about, if offered, is the 'Oak Alley Plantation House'. It is an opportunity to see more of the surrounding area, such as the Superdome and the swamps outside New Orleans. The plantation house is very interesting, and in a lovely setting. The house has a resident guide, and he is informative and amusing. The highlight is when he theatrically opened a shutter and you see the full glory of the oak alley of trees leading down to the Mississippi.

Take a bike ride along the Mississippi River, feed an alligator or stroll through time as you take in the stories behind one of our many historical attractions. New Orleans has so much to offer and caters to every traveller. So whether you're a sports fan, history buff, outdoor adventurer, aspiring chef or music lover, there's an attraction in New Orleans to suit your every need.

My research finds lots to do in and around New Orleans. Try this site for ideas.

<http://www.neworleanscvb.com/things-to-do/attractions/>

Orlando



Port Canaveral, one of the fastest growing cruise ports in America is the gateway to Orlando - home of killer whales, white-knuckle rides and Walt Disney. High energy, high tech and high up on the list of any fun seeker's to do list, this attraction rich city demands all your attention.

MGM Studios, the Magical Kingdom and Mickey Mouse, the original Disney World is the place to make your childhood fantasies come true. From fairytale castles and futuristic feasts to amazing adventures and animal antics, whichever park you visit you won't be disappointed. Or why not visit Universal Studios and learn the secrets of movie making whilst visiting all your favourite sets?

See the aquatic spectacle of Seaworld, or gaze at the stars at the Kennedy Space Center - home to one of the largest space observatories - where you can explore the 'Explorer' and spot satellite space stations. Busch Gardens hosts some of the biggest and fastest roller coasters in town and Daytona Beach is a great place to recover.

Suggestions

When you think of Orlando then Disney World and the Magic Kingdom are the first place that comes to mind. The lands include Adventureland, Liberty Square, Frontierland, the newly renovated Fantasyland, and Tomorrowland, as well as Main Street. Each land is uniquely themed and seamlessly blend from one to another. Must See Attractions: - Splash Mountain - Space Mountain - Big Thunder Mountain - The Haunted Mansion - Buzz Lightyear's Space Ranger Spin - The Seven Dwarf's Mine Ride - It's A Small World - Mickey's Philhar Magic.

Kennedy Space Center. Take a virtual flight to the moon and back at one of Florida's best attractions! The centre is about 45-minute drive from Orlando. View rockets from all eras of space exploration in the Rocket Garden, and see an actual Gemini program capsule on display in Early Space Exploration.

Finish your day by boarding a full-size Space Shuttle mock-up and strap in for a virtual launch into space on the Shuttle Launch Experience.

Everglades Airboat Safari . Be whisk across the waters at speeds into the scenic natural wetlands, crossing deep and shallow waters into the highways of the swamp. The centre is about 45 minutes outside of Orlando, and discover the diversity of flora and fauna in Florida's amazing wetlands.

Clearwater Beach. Escape the hustle and bustle of Orlando with a trip to Clearwater Beach. Cruise from Clearwater Beach, known for its calm sea conditions, and go deep-sea fishing.

Port Everglades



Is the gateway to Fort Lauderdale and just North of that other famous location Miami and all it has to offer. However, do not discard what is on offer in and around Fort Lauderdale.

Fort Lauderdale is a well-known South Florida metropolitan centre, named after three forts built by Major William Lauderdale during the Second Seminole War. The city is nicknamed "Venice of America" due to its extensive canal network, with over 165 miles of canal ways within city limits. As a beachfront city with a sunny, year-round tropical climate, Fort Lauderdale is a popular tourist destination. Seven miles of golden sand beaches are just a stroll away from luxurious hotels, beautiful shopping malls, and delicious restaurants that boast fresh seafood straight from the ocean, world-renowned steaks, or authentic ethnic food.

Suggestions

Visit the Everglades, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Home to 14 rare and endangered species, explore the 'river of grass on a traditional guided airboat tours.

Get up close with local wildlife at Flamingo Gardens (3750 S. Flamingo Road), a 60-acre tropical oasis that consists of the Botanical Gardens and Everglades Wildlife Sanctuary.

Further afield you have [Miami](#)

Port Canaveral



Port Canaveral is one of the largest cruise, cargo and naval ports in Florida.

It is also the place to be if there is a space launch whilst you are there.

Suggestions

Another great family attraction in Port Canaveral is Parker Brothers Concepts. Movie fans can't miss the Hollywood Auto Museum, which includes all your favourite cars like the Batmobile, the Ecto-1 from Ghostbusters or Optimus Prime from Transformers. P

The state-of-the-art Exploration Tower is Port Canaveral's newest attraction. This outstanding landmark is the perfect place to bring the whole family for an afternoon full of fun. Inside these seven floors of fun there are exhibits, interactive games, an auditorium, a café, gift shop and an indoor and outdoor observation deck, overlooking the entire Port.

Kick off your flip flops, put your toes in the soft white sand and enjoy the crystal blue waters of over 4 acres of beach at Jetty Park in Port Canaveral. You can travel light while making a trip down to the beach because Jetty Park has vendors that rent chairs, umbrellas, paddle boards, boogie boards and kayaks. Unlike some other beaches on the Space Coast, Jetty Park has lifeguards are on duty all year round to ensure your safety.

Cruise Destinations

After you've had enough sun, wash off at any of the outdoor showers the park has to offer and grab a snack at the air conditioned concession stand. Jetty Park's air conditioned two-story beach pavilion has everything from cheeseburgers and ice cream to fish tacos and cold sandwiches.

Is the gateway to Orlando

Tampa



The Port of Tampa is a destination in itself. Tampa has become a favourite port of departure for a growing number of cruise passengers who want to enhance the cruise experience with a day or two at either the front end or on the back end of any of a variety of Caribbean itineraries. In close proximity to the top-rated airport in the United States, cruise passengers can take a little more time sightseeing, shopping and taking in the cultural faire of the city of Tampa. World-class shopping, a unique assortment of museums and top zoos, Busch Gardens, and the allure of Ybor

City (the historic Latin Quarter pronounced "EE-BOR"), are just a few of the colourful characteristics that make Tampa one of the premier cruise port destinations in the South.

Suggestions

Busch Gardens; This park has better animal exhibits than the zoo! There is something for everyone. The park is clean & easy to follow on the map.

Sunshine Skyway Bridge; It may seem strange suggesting a bridge and not sure it is really an attraction, but it is big and beautiful to see, especially when there is a cruise ship going under it. There are rest areas to stop and picnic.

Riverwalk; Still very new but lots to see and do, close to museums, theatres and pubs. There are several boat tours available or you could rent one yourself. Very bicycle friendly and you can rent those too. Lot of walking so wear comfortable shoes.

CANADA

Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island



The terminal building has a number of stall type vendors including a tourist information desk where you can pick up a local map.

Charlottetown is a quaint quiet looking place.

If you enjoy reading then the children's book *Anne of Green Gables* was written here, the writer Lucy M. Montgomery was from Charlottetown & the story was based here also. There is a shop of the name *Anne of Green Gables* where you can

find everything and anything that has the name on it, there is also a museum.

Suggestions

St. Dunstan's Basilica; Even if you are not a spiritual person, you cannot help but feel something, anything, when here. This is a must see when on the Island.

Victoria Park; While strolling the boardwalk, breathe in the fresh ocean air and meet friendly people! Stop at a local coffee shop and visit unique little shops.

Victoria Row; Great place to spend a couple of hours, lots of interesting shops with Island products and a great place for a drink, snack, lunch or dinner.

Province House National Historic Site of Canada; This is a fantastic place to visit in the Charlottetown area.

Corner Brook



Corner Brook is Newfoundland's second city and is a city located on the west coast of the island of Newfoundland in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada.

You will immediately notice the spectacular setting. The city is on the eastern end of Humber Arm and surrounded by some of the largest mountains in Newfoundland. It is one of the prettiest cities in Canada.

Suggestions

Corner Brook Stream Trail; Lots of trails mapped out on signs around town at the beginning of Glynmill Inn Pond, Margaret Bowater Park or Old City Hall. Clean trails around Glynmill Inn Pond with some not too strenuous hills! Spend time with the swans and ducks! Depending on the pace or walk you can spend an hour or hours strolling the wooded areas in the centre of town!

Captain James Cook Historic Site; Beautiful view overlooking Humber Arm. Very nice historical sight' you can see why Captain Cook enjoyed this place. There is a monument dedicated to Captain Cook at this site with great historical value. Great place to lookout over the Bay of Islands.

Historic Train Site; Don't miss this museum. The restored passenger train is in excellent condition. It cost \$3, 2016, for an adult and you get to climb through all the trains. Allow about 1 hour for a good visit.

Cruise Destinations

Gaspe



Gaspe is a city at the tip of the Gaspé Peninsula in the Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine region of eastern Quebec, Canada.

Rising dramatically from the Gulf of St. Lawrence, massive, sheer Percé Rock towers off the tip of Quebec's Gaspé Peninsula like a ship at sea. This rugged, windswept region spans 11,714 square miles and is split into five natural areas: the Coast, Land's End, the Chaleur Bay, the Valley, and the Upper Gaspé. It is home to four national parks, including

Bonaventure-Island-and-Percé-Rock, summer nesting home of some 200,000 northern gannets, the continent's largest colony of gannet seabirds.

Gaspe, the main town of the peninsula and the administrative and commercial center, is on a hillside overlooking the York Rivière. The town owes its fame to Jacques Cartier, since it was here that he first set foot on the continent of North America in July 1534.

Suggestions

Pierced Rock (Rocher-Perce); The boat tour from the Perce quay that goes around Rocher Percé is worth the money. Rain or shine, this place is amazing.

Fort Peninsula; This shore battery was constructed to protect Gaspe from enemy attacks in WW2. It is a good stop for the history buffs and the kids. Spend about 30 minutes here for some free fun.

Promenade Jacques Cartier; A beautiful relaxing walk along the wooden path, very friendly people and delicious ice cream.

Halifax, Nova Scotia



Halifax is the principal city of Nova Scotia and one of the most dramatically indented coastlines in the world. It is also one of the closest Canadian ports to Europe, hence its early prominence in transatlantic trade (Samuel Cunard was born here). For lovers of maritime history, a call at the cruise port Halifax will be one of the most memorable of a cruise around the USA's Eastern Seaboard and the Canadian Maritimes.

When the Titanic hit an iceberg and sank in April 1912, the rescue and recovery operation was co-ordinated from Halifax, which became the last resting place for many of its victims. The city's fascinating Maritime Museum - set right on its waterfront - holds remnants of the ship, including a steamer chair.

Equally interesting are the two- to three-hour 'Historic Halifax Downtown Walks', which leave from the International Visitor Centre on Sackville Street and show visitors the city's highlights, including the 19th century mansion of George Wright, one of the 33 millionaires who joined Titanic's maiden voyage.

Suggestions

As you got off the ship you are escorted to shuttle buses that are used to take you out of the port, as you could not walk around the port as per usual as it was a working cargo port so a dangerous place to walk around. The modes of transport were old London buses which were pink.

Cruise Destinations

Halifax is a very walkable, charming city and a very easy DIY. The architecture is a mix of Victorian and modern buildings. There is a FRED a 'Free Ride Everywhere Downtown' which is a HOHO bus system, it gets very busy but will take you to all the points of interest in Halifax.

The harbour-side area is awesome, by Pier 21, right next to where the ship will dock, is Canada's Immigration Museum. The exhibits are done quite well. A little further East at the waterfront is the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, with some very interesting exhibits especially the one on the Titanic. Although the Titanic sunk several hundred miles offshore from Halifax, the graves of many of those who perished are in Halifax. It is possible to visit these cemeteries: nineteen are in the Mount Olivet Catholic Cemetery, ten are in the Baron de Hirsch Jewish Cemetery, and 121 are in the Fairview Lawn Cemetery. Whilst you are by the harbour try the Duck Harbour tour.

The Citadel National Historic Park Worth the uphill climb, the Citadel is a stone fortress offering amazing views of the city and the harbour to its visitors. The view from the Citadel will show you the amazing architecture of downtown between the hilltop and harbour, the harbour mouth and the naval dockyard. There is a fee for going in Can\$7 in 2013.

If you like flora and fauna the Halifax Public Gardens, found at the corner of South Park Street and Spring Garden Road, are the oldest formal Victorian gardens in North America. Open from sunrise until sunset from May to November, this is a great place to experience if you are visiting this city.

If you want to visit the Titanic Cemetery, be warned it is quite a way out of town.

If you would prefer to see some of coastal Nova Scotia, there is usually a shore excursion to Peggy's Cove about 35 minutes from Halifax. Peggy's Cove is very photogenic albeit a bit commercialized. However, the lighthouse in Peggy's Cove is a familiar one in almost any tourist publication about Nova Scotia.

Iles de la Madeleine



The Magdalen Islands form a small archipelago in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence with a land area of 205.53 square kilometres. Though closer to Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia, the islands form part of the Canadian province of Quebec.

July through August has the best weather, although plenty of cultural events take place May to October. Early August is the annual Acadian festival in Havre-Aubert, celebrating the region's marine history.

Suggestions

There are many lovely shops, galleries, restaurants, and cafés in the restored fish/boat houses that line the one street. Shopping wise, then located at the entrance of the La Grave tourist area on Havre-Aubert, Artisans du Sable is a celebration of sand and its many creative uses. You can buy sand-carved plates, bowls, lamps, and sculptures. Shop the nautical antiques, hand-painted dishes, and other Québécois knickknacks at nearby Vent du Large.

There are some fantastic jewellers (some offering jewellery making workshops in their on-site ateliers) and artists sharing their island-inspired work. It's worth taking the time to browse, ask questions, and engage with the islanders.

For lunch, don't miss the Café de la Grave - the food is excellent, the service is friendly and welcoming (in either English or French) and there is a great selection of local beers. A place full of character!

For kids, check out the aquarium, the playground at the end of the street, and the museum (Musée de la Mer) up the hill. Also, kids will enjoy the sandbox (indoor or outdoor) at the Artisans du Sable.

Quebec City



Always a highlight of a 'Fall Foliage' cruise along the New England and Canadian coastline, Quebec City is a living testimonial to the grace of Old Europe. Its steep cobbled streets make an atmospheric counterpoint to the trees blazing crimson, yellow and gold and creating one of the most dazzling spectacles on earth.

Artists display their wares in its tree-lined squares and Europhiles can shop for fine antiques and savour fine coffee, croissants and La Vie Francais in Parisian-style pavement

cafés.

Do not miss the magnificent view from the turrets of medieval-style Chateau Frontenac, which dominates the city. Despite its appearance, this hotel-cum-museum dates from the 19th century, when it was constructed by the Canadian and Pacific Railway Company. A visit here for afternoon tea-with-a-view will make a perfect end to a day ashore.

The sail in along the Lawrence River is impressive with the landscape being on both sides.

Suggestions

If lucky your ship will berth to the right of Château Frontenac, a stroll along past many interesting but generally expensive shops. You could mooch around Native Indian shops, or the many art shops then get the lift up to the Chateau.

On the dock side near to where you berth there is a large marquee which houses tourist information and also has lots of seating where you can connect to the Internet for free, it was a very fast connection. There are shuttle buses laid on but if you wanted to it was easy enough to walk into town.

The old town is nice to meander through with lovely streets and cobbled roads. Lots of restaurants and cafes with outdoor seating, very continental, the architecture of the place is very appealing to.

Save your feet and get the efficient elevator system called the Funicular to go from Upper to Lower Quebec City. The journey up is very quick and the fare was CAD\$2.50.

The trip to the Montmorency Falls is worthwhile. They are higher than Niagara and they drop over the shoreline into the Saint Lawrence River.

Saguenay



Saguenay is a city in the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean region of Quebec, Canada, on the Saguenay River.

Extravagant valleys and granite cliffs, formed during the last Ice Age and some 500m high, tower above Saguenay's glittering waterways. These colossal canyons stretch 100km along the Saguenay River.

The fjord is the most southerly one in the northern hemisphere. As deep as 270m in some places, the riverbed rises to a depth of only 20m at the fjord's mouth at Tadoussac. This makes the relatively warm, fresh waters of the Saguenay jet out atop the frigid, salt waters of the St Lawrence, leading to massive volumes of krill, which in turn attract the visitor to the highlight of the region the spectacular sight of whales surfacing the shallower waters near the mouth of St Lawrence River.

Cruise Destinations

You will find friendly hosts with a love for gastronomy in the laid-back cafés, bars and swanky rooftop terraces. Explore the bustling museums, boutiques, and art galleries, not forgetting to sample some indulgent home-baked blueberry pie.

Suggestions

La Pulperie de Chicoutimi; If you are into local history, this museum has been really well done. It has English and French captions throughout and is really quite fascinating.

La Pyramide des Ha! Ha; The pyramid is actually a stage for concerts. Two sides are covered with hundreds of give way signs. Interesting to see and you can climb to the top from the inside.

Touverre. A nice place to stop and enjoy. The glass blowing presentations are in English and well done. It takes about 30 minutes. Small shop sells pieces and all are made in the shop

There are lots of boat tours into the Fjords.

Saint John, New Brunswick



Saint John is the largest city in New Brunswick. Located on the Bay of Fundy, Saint John has a vibrant arts centre, quality dining and shopping, pristine parks and history lined streets. Canada's oldest incorporated city, Saint John is a popular tourist destination known for its historic uptown streetscapes,

Suggestions

The City Tour by the local bus company charge just 20\$ for a two hour tour. It is rather good and you make three

photos stops, one at the City Market, second stop is far up a hill from where you have a really good view of the ship.

The Reversing Falls are a series of rapids on the Saint John River where the river runs through a narrow gorge before emptying into the Bay of Fundy. It is quite a sight to see when it is in full flow.

New Brunswick Museum This is an excellent museum, with interactive exhibits. Keep an eye open for Delilah-- the Right Whale. \$8pp, 2016.

The City Market with local vendors and artisans. This market has been around forever. You can get food and crafts. There are a couple of places to eat, or you can get stuff to take to the park across the street and have lunch outside. Take a look at the gates, which are originals.

The New Brunswick Museum and the trails and beauty of Rockwood Park.

Sept-Iles



Sept-Îles is a city in the Côte-Nord region of eastern Quebec, Canada.

Among the treasures to discover you will find a splendid archipelago, long sandy beaches, majestic rivers, a generous boreal forest, and a multitude of activities, each of which is more exciting than the last.

I found very mixed reviews for this port. From a pleasant little town to stay on board there is nothing to do or see.

Suggestions

Regional Museum of the North; There are artefacts from 8000 BC and local Innu Nation artefacts. It's quite small and will take less than an hour to visit. There is a nice gift shop but most books and literature is in French.

The Promenade; a nice walk with beautiful landscape views and an observation tower, the place to take in the fresh air.

St. John's, Newfoundland



St. John's, a city on Newfoundland Island off Canada's Atlantic coast, is the capital of Newfoundland and Labrador province. Its harbour, settled by the British in the 1600s, is enclosed by rugged hills.

Looking out over the city of St. John's, you may be reminded of a mini San Francisco (minus the cable cars). St. John's provides the ideal balance between nature and nightlife, from the East Coast Trail and its stunning scenery to the colourful entertainment district along George Street.

Although it's the largest city in Newfoundland, the vibe is still very small-town.

Suggestions

Signal Hill; On Signal Hill is Cabot Tower, the castle which is where the 1st Trans- Atlantic wireless message to England was sent. You can tour the castle gift store; go up to the top and look out at the colourful city of St. John's and you can see the narrows. It is free. Poster boards available to read to learn history of the narrows and the Battery. There are no food outlets at Signal Hill. Be ready to walk around and have a jacket any time of year

The Rooms; The Rooms is a great place to visit for all ages, there is something for everyone visiting the city. The views are amazing and the food in the cafe is wonder. And the first Wednesday of the month it's free admission after 6 pm. So if you are into history, paintings, exhibitions and the most unique building in the city then you must visit.

Jellybean Row Houses; Great to walk in the downtown and admire the beautiful houses that are so typical of St. John's. Do a walking tour if you can, it is worth the money.

Sydney, Nova Scotia



Sydney is a community and former city in Nova Scotia, known commonly as the Steel City. It is Nova Scotia's third largest city. Located on Cape Breton Island's east coast, stunning scenery abounds and tours are readily available to soak up the very best of Mother Nature's masterpieces.

The city was founded by the British Crown in 1785 and you can still find several buildings and landmarks dating back to this time. The Cape Breton Centre for Heritage and Science offers an insight into the history of Sydney; from its early

settlement, through the booming steel heydays to today, where the city attracts countless visitors to its breathtakingly scenic shoreline. The Cossit House and Jost House museums are also an excellent window on a world gone by. Faithfully restored and featuring knowledgeable guides in period costumes, you step back in time when you step through the front door. The success of Sydney is celebrated along the Oceanfront Esplanade with numerous statues and plaques, and for souvenirs, head to the vibrant Sydney River shopping district.

Suggestions

The Big Fiddle; The big fiddle is on the main dock of Sydney where the cruise liners dock. When a boat is in, the market opens and you can find just about anything there. Pictures and crafts made by the people of Cape Breton. Prices are good and products are great.

Jost House Museum; This is one of several little historic buildings in the oldest part of Sydney....it is a neat little area, and a very easy walk for cruise ship travelers, as it is very near the government wharf where they dock. There are several other historic buildings in the vicinity, with summer staff dressed in era clothing and willing to extend local history lore and information. All can be visited in a short time frame & walk.

Cape Breton Centre for Craft and Design; Lots of lovely and unusual crafts from lots of different designers. Really worth it. Looking at the waterfront it is on the left hand side of the shopping road.

AROUND THE WORLD TRIP

A Round the World Cruise? Wonderful.

Make sure that all your family are aware of where you are by printing out the timetable from the brochure and making sure that they have your email address.

Tips and advice.

Cases: You have plenty of room and as you are Southampton to Southampton, you are not restricted. Your only restriction is getting to Southampton.

Formal Nights: are to you at the moment the biggest nightmare, Don't let it be. The cruise is divided into sections so there is no need to have something for each day, just treat each section as a cruise and remember, people are joining and leaving so for the ladies it doesn't matter if it has been worn before, none of the 'But I have already been seen in that!.' With regards to the ladies wardrobe, think 'Mix and Match' and for the men, Dinner Suit, Blazer and Flannels, mainly Black Bow ties, again, mix and match. But, remember the Laundry facilities.

The Laundry: Sea days are busy. Formal Night day is busy. Driers take twice as long as the washers, so there is always a queue for a drier. People get in there as soon as possible in the morning. 10.00am and its heaving. 2/3 hours later or later in the afternoon and you have it to yourself.

Wardrobe and storage. Use your suitcases as part of your wardrobe system. Take some 'space saving hangers' you know the ones that allow you to hang many things on one hanger.

'The Shop In The Cabin.' This is a case under one of the beds which took the consumables which you may run out of and need during the three months. Deodorants, Toilet Soap, Tooth Paste, Talcum Powder, Insect Sprays and Wipes, Sun Creams of different powers, (Don't forget you are going where the sun SHINES in January February and March), Tissues, Birthday and Anniversary Cards whilst you are away. Forgot that didn't you?? And Insurance renewals?

Sod's Law stated that in the middle of the Pacific your false teeth would break, so take a Denture Repair kit, obtained from the Chemist. Don't forget your medicines for three months. You might have to get your Doctor to give you a larger than normal prescription to cover the period. Remember your spare pair of glasses

Spare batteries for the electronic gadgets and don't forget the battery chargers for this that and the other, even the electric toothbrush and mobile phones! And whilst talking battery chargers, you might need, so you might as well take it, an adapter consisting of a short length of cable with 4 sockets on it. This is because some of the 13 amp sockets are so low to the desk that you cannot get the plug in if it is a bulky one.

Think about taking a laptop with you to download your Digi camera pictures, you are going to have lots.

A few little things. Take an alarm clock with you, there will be mornings you want to get up early.

Take a small note book with you and make notes on each day. Then you can expand on these notes on your laptop or if not take a larger Journal. By the way, don't feel awkward and writing a journal as you go along, lots of people do, sitting out in the sun. At the end you will have the 'ultimate record' of what you did. If this is a 'Special on off' then think about on a day by day basis, file all the Horizons, Port Pamphlets and many many other things which when you look back, you can say**WOW!**

Some things are very important so start making a list now

Cruise Destinations

The House: If you have good neighbours who can keep an eye on the place. Leave them with a complete set of keys and ask if they can clear the post every day and stacked it somewhere out of sight in date order. Ask them to open windows open on suitable days so the place looks lived in. Another thing you can do is fit a timer to a socket in that a Table or Standard Lamp can come on and off as required. Neighbours can also open and close curtains. Let other close neighbours know you are away and kept an eye open as well. The more eyes the better.

Cover for Insurance: Read your home insurance for maximum a house can be left unoccupied. Think about asking a member of the family to come and stay. It is a free holiday for them.

The car: To leave it locked and alarmed in the garage for three months "might" have run the battery down and with no battery, well again not an option. So again see if a member of the family can look after it, or even again ask a neighbour to give it a run now and again.

Pets: Maybe not into a kennel. Again ask a member of the family, friends. Better with someone they know. They will forgive you when you get back, it will take time but they will come round.

Fridge and Freezer: Run them down, leave empty and switch them off. Remember to leave the doors open.

Central Heating: LEAVE ON AND ON A LOW SETTING. If anyone is coming to stay, show/tell them how to turn it up and gently remind them to turn it down before they leave. On your return and after the first Gas or Electric Bill, be ready for questioning by the suppliers as the readings are low.

Life on board: This is your home for three months. Do things together, but lead a life of your own. On a long cruise like this, 'Special Interest Lectures' are arranged so read the Daily Horizon and see what is on, when and where. Think about learning something new, you will have the time.

Excursions: **BEWARE.** When you book your World tour you may be on one tier, but by the end you could have climbed a couple more. You will see lots of excursions you will want to do and do not want to miss out, so you may think about booking all of them. Only to discover that, when you go up a level, you will not get the new discount, because you booked them at the lower one. So unless it is a 'must do' excursion, wait till you get to the next step on the Peninsular Club Ladder. And don't panic, if an excursion is that popular, they will put extra places on and you can go on the wait list.

Your On Board Account: With regards to the settling of the account, this takes place at the end of each sector. Usual thing, interim statement a few days before the end of the sector for you to check out. So, think ahead, funds in current account or Credit card, remember also to let your bank, card provider know where you are off too. The last thing you will want is for payment to be stopped.

Now a bit of a nasty I am afraid. Besides your normal medicines and Sea Sick tablets... just in case.... Take with you cough and cold remedies. Coughs and Colds? I hear you ask. Your first leg will be from Southampton and it will be in winter. Then you will be joined on the way by passengers leaving the UK in winter to you in summer so if the UK is going through a severe Cough and Cold bout, these people are very kindly bringing it on board and a trip to the medical centre can be very costly.

Final tip? Don't look at the timetable and 'look forward to getting to', live every day as it comes.

THE PORTS

I have tried to make this a cruise from East to West, but a little imagination is required. All ports with a little research are an easy DIY.

PANAMA CANAL



The Panama Canal is about as different from (say) the Suez Canal as you can get.

Get up bright and early to see the whole transit, say about 5am.

If you can a seat at the front, Crows Nest or similar, is perfect for seeing the lock gates open. You normally enter the canal early, about 7am, and it takes about 2 hours to pass through the 3 Cantun locks. There will be lots of sightseers

on land watching as you go through. The whole experience is absolutely fantastic - a day cruising slowly through great lakes bordered by rainforest, spending hours watching for wildlife, the highlight being spotting several crocodiles. It rains a lot in Panama!

It is normally very hot so make sure you have plenty of skin protection and stay in the shade

P&O do a tour £70pp (2016) and it is well worth it. Tender from ship in Gatun lock, coach through rain forest to pick up ferry to cruise through Canal and locks into Pacific. Coach back. There is basic food and plenty of soft drinks to keep you going and you can move freely around the boat to see what was going on. Now, it could be a long day if you are delayed whilst in the locks. A recommended trip.

PACIFIC OCEAN SIDE

PANAMA

Fuerte Amador



Fuerte Amador (or Fort Amador) is positioned at the end of a thin causeway. It's populated by a small entertainment district of bars, restaurants, and shops, but more importantly, the stop offers easy access to the modern, vibrant metropolis of Panama City. The country's commercial capital, the cosmopolitan city is known for its sleek high-rises and romantic historic districts. Further afield, you'll find rainforests teeming with birds and wildlife; secluded villages entrenched in long-standing traditions; and pristine beach-laced islands.

Set at the southern gateway to the Panama Canal on the Pacific Ocean-facing side, this port is a fixture for cruisers prepping for — or finishing up — a transit through the legendary passageway.

If shuttles are laid on they will only be to the port entrance. Shuttles into the city are not permitted. There will be taxis near the port entrance. They accept US\$, haggle and agree a price before getting in. As a guide a 3 hr tour should set you back about US\$90 per taxi.

There is a HOHO bus that stops near the port entrance. It takes about 2 hrs to do the full tour and it is recommended that you stay on the bus for the full tour and not get off.

Suggestions

The main attraction here is, of course, the Panama Canal, which ships are either just exiting or about to enter. Tours take cruise passengers to the Miraflores Locks or on boat rides through the canal's Gatun Lake. Other tours focus on attractions within Panama City,

Flamenco Shopping Plaza; The Flamenco Shopping Plaza is an international retail centre right next to the Fuerte Amador cruise port.

One recommendation is getting a taxi to see Miraflores. The museum is worthwhile, and if you get there soon after opening (9:00 AM), you will probably get to see ships going through the locks. If there is traffic in the locks, plan on spending a couple of hours here.

From Miraflores, take a taxi to Casco Viejo (old town in Panama) it has become pretty touristy, but you can see the old building, churches and the original headquarters of the Panama Canal construction (now the museum of the Panama Canal, which is Panama's best history museum).

There are many restaurants in Casco Viejo, but if you like fish and seafood, you might like to try a variety of inexpensive ceviche from the numerous vendors at the Mercado de Mariscos (Seafood Market). On your way back to the ship, have the taxi driver take you to Ancon Hill to see some jungle in the city and a panorama view of the port, the city, Casco Viejo and the Bridge of the Americas.

Panama City



Panama City, the capital of Panama, is a modern city framed by the Pacific Ocean and man-made Panama Canal. The most cosmopolitan capital in Central America, Panama City is both vibrant metropolis and gateway to tropical escapes. Many worlds coexist here.

Welcoming both east and west, Panama is a regional hub of trade and immigration. The resulting cultural cocktail forges a refreshing 'anything goes' attitude, more dynamic and fluid than its neighbours.

One word of warning. If you are planning a DIY to this city then it has a major traffic issue with jams lasting hours.

Suggestions

Casco Viejo, its cobblestoned historic centre, is famed for colonial-era landmarks like the neoclassical Palacio Presidential and bougainvillea-filled plazas lined with cafes and bars.

Avenida Balboa; You can get spectacular views of the city from along this roadway. There is a picturesque park, actually one that is quite wide, between the roadways.

Plaza Bolivar; The square, situated in the old town has a centre piece of a statue of Bolivar on a horse. It is small but surrounded by cafes, restaurants and lovely 19th century buildings. A quiet square to relax in.

COSTA RICA

Costa Rica is a small country, about the size of West Virginia, but it's got massive appeal as one of the most ecologically diverse places on earth. However, Costa Rica's real draw is its lush, natural beauty and biodiversity -- the "rich coast" after which it is named. Most cruise travellers use Puntarenas as a kick-off point for eco-adventures on the ground (horseback riding or hiking in the rainforest), in the water (kayaking, white-water rafting) and even in the air (zip-lining, an activity which originated here and is now popular throughout the Americas and the Caribbean).

Cruise passengers visiting Costa Rica's Pacific Coast will come ashore in one of two places -- Puerto Caldera, a commercial port serving the nearby seaside town of Puntarenas, and Puntarenas itself.

Puerto Caldera



The city of Puerto Caldera, on Costa Rica's Pacific coast, has a number of them within easy reach for cruise visitors. Just to the south, Carara is a mecca for birders, especially those chasing the scarlet macaw. Poas Volcano is inland, and rises to nearly 9,000 feet. See it before it blows again. Barra Honda contains a series of limestone caves. Palo Verde preserves one of the last tropical dry rainforests in Central America. Arenal has the most active volcano in the country. Tapanti contains species of orchids

discovered only in 2009. Grab your hiking boots and a pair of binoculars. It's all a feast, wherever you go.

Puntarenas is about 20 mins away by taxi.

Puntarenas



Puntarenas is a lively town that hosts josefinos (residents of the capital city of San Jose) on holiday, as well as international tourists. The main drag, a wide walkway fronting the beach that's jam-packed with places to shop and eat, is even called Paseo de los Turistas -- loosely, "stroll of the tourists."

Puntarenas is one of the most important tourism regions in Costa Rica. Its coastline is full of islands, inlets, beaches, and very beautiful natural treasures, all which make it an excellent tourist destination. There is a multitude of attractions based around the beaches, as well as protected areas, both land based and around its islands.

The area's centre is located at Puntarenas which acts as a place for lodging, distribution, port of call, and excursions. Within its tourism locales you can find a variety of hotels and traditional cabins close to the ocean as well as all-inclusive lodging facilities.

Suggestions

Carara National Park, Carara is one of Costa Rica's most popular National Parks, in large part due to its proximity to San José. This is also where many cruise ship's passengers are bused for a day trip when the liners dock just up the coast at Puerto Caldera. This is a fantastic park with a ton of opportunities for wild-life watching, and particularly birding. However, to get the most out of this park you need a guide.

Poas Volcano National Park: The Escalonia Cloud Forest Trail is a paved, very user friendly gradual slope taking you to the edge of the volcano. Bring rain gear for insurance. There is a possibility that clouds will prevent you from seeing the actual volcano or the lagoon.

Very nice gift shop and food court with restrooms.

Cruise Destinations

Pura Vida Garden And Waterfalls, This extremely beautiful area is located in Bijagual de Turrubares and can be reached after entering the Carara National Park. The waterfall is one of the highest in the country, reaching some 650 ft. There are also colourful gardens, trails, and pools for swimming in this area.

Aseo De Los Turistas (Tourist Walk); This stretch is located along the main beach in Puntarenas and is one of the most heavily visited places because of its variety of high-quality services for tourists. It runs from the Marino del Pacífico (located by the historic train station) to La Punta. Around the cruise ship pier there are many little kiosks, and places to purchase local arts and crafts as well as traditional fruit salad and frozen drinks known as "Churchills." Along this stretch, there are other services provided for tourists like sport fields, park areas, showers, restrooms, and everything else you need to enjoy the beach.

NICARAGUA

Corinto



The tourist blurb is; No one was watching, but Nicaragua turned into a new and wild adventure tourism phenomenon, and there's still much left to discover there in addition to the premium local rum and strings of beckoning volcanic peaks. Look for Puerto Corinto, a small scenic town on the northwest coast for the real local flavour in a region bounded by great lakes to the south and Honduras to the north. Peaks of neighbouring volcanoes, pristine beaches, fields of sugar cane, and lush mangrove forests combine

to create an intoxicating experience for all senses. Stroll the Costa Azul for views of the bay and its islands. In nearby Chinandega, discover Mayan artefacts at the archaeological museum. Or, explore the remains of León Viejo, buried under centuries of volcanic debris.

However, this is a Review I found on Trip Advisor, I have copied parts only: 'If I were to give advice to someone else making the Corinto cruise stop, I would tell them to get a pedicab ride through the town then return to spend the day on the ship.

The town is a typical poor Central American port town. Not picturesque in the way most North American and European travellers are looking for picturesque. We found it interesting, but I think most travellers would find it dirty and very poor and run down, and perhaps even a little scary. The walk to the beach was about 8 to 10 long blocks and there wasn't much to see on the way except the usual poor neighbourhoods.'

The full review can be found in Trip advisor under this port.

Things to do

Corinto is actually an interesting town, lot of history there, great seafood restaurant on the 'artificial beach'. The seafood in garlic is delicious!!!!

Some cruisers go to Leon, However, take note Leon is quite a drive from the port.

Cruise Destinations

San Juan Del Sur



San Juan del Sur is a municipality and coastal town on the Pacific Ocean, in the Rivas department in southwest Nicaragua.

Easy going San Juan del Sur is the hub for exploration of Nicaragua's toned-and-tanned southern Pacific beaches. The town itself, with its clapboard Victorian houses, a towering statue of Christ on a neighbouring hillside and a steady influx of young and beautiful international travellers and surfers, is quite fun, with a good range of dining, drinking, shopping and

nightlife venues.

This is a Tender port. It is a short ride to the dock and, a few steps to reach dockside,

Suggestions

Mirador del Cristo de la Misericordia; Be prepared to climb about 200 steps to get to the top and pay about \$3 USD each but the view is great yet the wind is strong so hold on to your camera.

Parque de Aventura; maybe as a trip. Very good! Worth every penny :) The ecotour which included a short hike on the trails with an informative guide, the iguanas and the zip line.

San Juan del Sur Beach; This is a wide beach with absolutely no shade except inside the beach restaurants. Ditto with washrooms. There is new development at the end of the malecon by the fisherman's port and where the cruise ships dock.

GUATEMALA

Puerto Quetzal



Modern meets Maya in Puerto Quetzal. Mayan culture still prevails in parts of Guatemala and other Central American nations. Weavers spin their brilliantly coloured stories on backstrap looms, while monolithic stone temples of Tikal stand in silent testament to ancient ritual and wisdom.

Cruise passengers especially benefit from the modern port conveniences in Puerto Quetzal. The facilities here make transfers to Mayan archaeological sites of interest much easier,

including adventures into the interior.

Suggestions

The town is nothing special. You find a 'crafts market' with a nice selection of hand woven shawls, handbags and all kinds of souvenirs. There are also some Wi-Fi hot spots if you bring your own gadget, an overpriced restaurant and a stall with cold beer and coconuts. They sell coconut water with or without rum. The beer is a little cheaper than on the ship.

When you get out of that little market you find a taxi stand. It is an organized taxi company and the prices are not negotiable. They offer different tours which are cheaper than the ships excursions. When you sail into the port you will see a mile long black beach. A trip to the beach is US\$5 per person each way.

MEXICO

Acapulco



Today, Acapulco is considered the country's 16th largest metropolitan area and one of the most important destinations since its golden days in the 1950s.

Once the playground for the rich and famous, and dubbed the 'Pearl of the Pacific' in its heyday, Acapulco remains gorgeous. Visit romantic cliff-side restaurants, the impressive 17th century fort, a world-class botanical garden or the old town's charming shady zócalo (plaza).

Suggestions

La Quebrada; If you have the time to go watch this it is a classic thing to do, this has been going on for many years and the views are stunning. Enjoyed the divers speedy free form climbing to the dive platform. It costs 40 peso fee per person (2016).

Old Acapulco; Lots of shops and cool things to see. Also some good authentic food.

Beaches

Punta Diamante; Here you can walk along the beach, horseback ride or rent an arc. Great sunsets.

Costera; The Bay Area is perfect for jet skis, boat parachute, sun bathing, and swimming.

Cabo San Lucas



Cabo San Lucas, a resort city on the southern tip of Mexico's Baja California peninsula, is known for its beaches, water-based activities and nightlife. Playa El Médano is Cabo's main beach, with outdoor restaurants and numerous bars.

As you sail in look out for the stunning view of what they call Cabo Land's End from the ship, it looks a bit like the Needles on the Isle of Wight, with a lovely white sand beach between a couple of the rocky outcrops.

This is a tender port.

Suggestions

There is really no need to take an expensive ship tour to see Cabo Land's End. Ships drop anchor quite close to it, and there is a lovely view from the outside decks and balconies. There are also dozens (if not hundreds) of private charter boats and tours that will take you there for just a few dollars.

Land's End; Land's End is by far the most impressive attraction Cabo has to offer. Hop on a panga (M\$175) and head to El Arco (the Arch), a jagged natural feature that partially fills with the tide. Pelicans, sea lions, sea, sky - this is what brought people to Cabo in the first place, and it's still magical, despite the backdrop of cruise ships.

Cruise Destinations

Town Square; Also known as 'Parque Amelia Wilkes' this square is perfect for relaxing away from the partying throngs in Cabo. Take a breather beneath the gazebo or in the shade of the poultry-shaped bush. The square is surrounded by classy shops and cantinas if you get restless.

There is a beach, about 30 minute walk from where the tenders berth, or a water taxi away. Sun beds and a gorgeous sea. A short distance along is a beach bar for those Margaritas, beers and burritos for lunch.

Colon



There is an organised (ship's) excursion from Colon which included a visit to the canal locks, a rainforest walk, and a boat trip. The tour takes you through Cristobal and it is not recommend walking around this town on your own - it's got to be one of the scariest looking places you will see.

Ensenada



Ensenada is a coastal city in Mexico, the third-largest in Baja California. Lying 125 kilometres south of San Diego on the Baja California Peninsula,

As one cruiser put it; don't leave the ship, it's a dump.

Suggestions

First Street; Everything you look for on one street. From restaurants, bars to cute little coffee shops, tattoo shops and souvenir stores.

Canopy Tour in Ensenada; Challenge yourself to a series of ziplines and hanging bridges on a 1-hour canopy tour in Las Cañadas Campamento, near Ensenada. Soar through the air with views of mountains, forests, and a campground lake; this zipline tour includes a guided trip through the course, equipment and use of onsite lockers. Maybe do this as an excursion.

Plaza Civica; There is not a lot to see in the actual plaza but the three heads. But if you walk around it you get a beautiful view of the ocean. Good to visit day or night. It is right behind first street so if you get hungry there are a bunch of places to grab a bite.

Cruise Destinations

Huatulco



Huatulco is a resort region on the Mexican Riviera coast, southeast of Acapulco and where the foothills of the Sierra Madre meet the Pacific Ocean.

The region is made up of 9 bays, including the popular cruise-ship port of call Santa Cruz Bay.

Once a small fishing village, Huatulco has been developed out of the surrounding jungle and now offers visitors a range of amenities from shops and restaurants to golf and every kind

of watersport. Look out for the galleries and shops featuring handmade Oaxacan arts and crafts - they make delightful gifts. Lovely beach, lots of opportunities to sit on the beach with a cool beer!

Past the marina is Land's End promontory, site of Playa del Amor (Lover's Beach) and El Arco, a natural archway in the seacliffs.

The Huatulco bays are strung along the coast for 15km west and 10km east from the harbor at Santa Cruz Huatulco. The 'downtown' area, 1km north of Santa Cruz, is called La Crucecita.

The cruise market has helped to spawn all sorts of ready-packaged activities for visitors here.

Suggestions

Santa Cruz Bay; Lots of Beach palapa Restaurants, great food, nice people and service, you can see cruise ships come in, lots of boat rides available for tours and fishing, water activities. Make sure you only buy from people with Tourism ID on!

La Crucecita; La Crucecita is a traditional artisan Oaxacan (wah-HAH-Kah) town. There was a nice town square which you could sit for awhile and relax. Lots of shops with handcrafts. Many restaurants with authentic Mexican food.

Beach-lovers are spoilt for choice at Mexico's first eco-tourism resort and new cruise port, Huatulco, for there are 22 miles of pristine sand stretched across nine sparkling bays, each hidden from the other. Even within these, there are secret coves and hidden lagoons to discover.

Don't miss the stunning church which is on the beach, it has no walls, just a roof!

Things to buy are the colourful ceramics.

Manzanillo



Manzanillo is a Pacific Ocean port city and resort in the Mexican state of Colima. It's the site of 2 bays, Bahía de Manzanillo and Bahía de Santiago. The latter is known for beaches such as Playa La Audiencia, with calm surf for water sports.

Magical, historic, cultural, intimate - these are but a few of the words that best describe the balmy and magical escape that is Manzanillo on the Pacific Coast of Mexico.

The waters off the coast have numerous coral reefs, shipwrecks and other dive sites. With a high concentration of marlin, the area is also known for deep-sea sport fishing. Visit between December and April and you're likely to glimpse one of the playful whales swimming in Manzanillo Bay.

Cruise Destinations

Suggestions

Malecon; A photo opportunity. The huge marlin statue represents the city of Manzanillo and is a great photo op. There are lots of statues by Mexican artists along the walkway and it is worth seeing.

La Campana; A smaller set of Mayan ruins, with a small pyramid and a grave area amongst the other stone walls. Worth a visit if you are in the area, this sort of history is becoming more rare all the time.

Ola Brisa Gardens; Ola Brisa Gardens is a wonderful and magnificent place to visit. This is an absolute "must see" stop if you visit Manzanillo.

Mazatlan



Mazatlán is a Mexican resort town along the Pacific shoreline in the state of Sinaloa. Sandy beaches line its 21km-long malecón (boardwalk), and it's renowned for big-game fishing.

It's a historic capital. It's a beach resort. It's a lively, romantic town. Whatever you look for in a Mexican holiday it is on the menu in Mazatlan.

Suggestions

Mazatlan Aquarium; With over three decades of history, the Mazatlan Aquarium continues to be one of the most complete of its kind in Latin America. Due to its facilities and shows, it has become a perfect and not to be missed place to spend an afternoon.

Malecon; It is a nice walk along the ocean. You see the different monuments that are part of Mazatlan's history. You can experience the fish market where the fishermen sell their catch. You can stop at different boutiques and restaurants.

Plaza Machado; The Plazuela is beautiful. Great restaurants. Wonderful atmosphere. A must for any visitor.

Lookout Mountain; If you are looking for great views this is the place to visit, Lookout Hill - cerro del vigia. You can see the harbour where the cruise ships dock. Worth the taxi ride to the top! Going from the Golden zone on the far north side all the way to the south side where Old Mazatlan is should cost you \$140 pesos. (2016)

Puerto Vallarta



Puerto Vallarta is squeezed into the thin space between Banderas Bay and the verdant folds of the Sierra Madre. It's no longer the well-kept secret of the artists, writers and Hollywood stars who first "discovered" it in the 1960s, but it still retains the essence of the fishing village it once was. Viejo Vallarta, the old town, is a mix of red-tiled buildings, cobbled streets, chic shops and busy open markets. Other highlights include Mismaloya

Beach, Gringo Gulch, and Conchas Chinas, the Beverly Hills of Vallarta. Head inland for more adventure, up into the rugged canyons and luxuriant jungles of the mountains.

Things to do

Puerto Vallarta's El Malecon Boardwalk. "An easy walk now goes through all the way to the main plaza from old town" Many vendors, the river walk, bars and restaurants galore all available along the route. A great place for people watching.

Cruise Destinations

Vallarta Botanical Gardens. You can easily take a bus to here. The gardens are well cared for and there are many different plants to see and enjoy. With its orchard house and a new chapel being built, it should not be missed. Hint, look up at the ceiling, not only in the chapel itself, but in the small side bathroom, you will see why.

The walk down to the crystal clear river is easy; bring a bathing suit for a refreshing dip in the cooling waters. The walk back up is a little more difficult, but you can reward yourself with a fantastic drink and lunch in their upstairs restaurant, not the cheapest, but it is excellent.

USA

Now, if this is your first USA port then you have American immigration to do. You need your passports and you should have completed your ESTA. Also be aware that you cannot take food into the USA. Tip: try and be up early and listen out for the announcement on saying if you were ready you can go straight to your immigration interview. If you can be one of the first in the queue you could be off the ship by 8.30 and later and it could be closer to 2pm. This is something you need to be aware of if sailing into the US because a face-to-face interview is required shore-side for every passenger.

After a few questions, you are fingerprinted and passport is stamped, you are on your way.

Los Angeles



Los Angeles is a sprawling Southern California city and the centre of the nation's film and television industry.

Alive with glitz and glamour, Los Angeles - the City of Angels - is all about fulfilling the American Dream all the way from Hollywood and the original Disneyland to swish Beverly Hills, Malibu and then Hollywood Hills where the stars love to live out that dream in their spectacular mansions.

There is a shuttle to the Aquarium and sea front area.

Suggestions

For free tour guides, try here; <https://www.latourist.com/index.php?page=free-publications>

Across the road from the Aquarium is an outlet shopping mall where you can get free Wi Fi.

Griffith Park; Spanning an impressive 4,210 acres, it's easy to get lost in LA's largest public green space, much of which remains unchanged from the days when Native Americans settled here. There are myriad attractions here including LA Zoo & the Observatory.

Grauman's Chinese Theatre; It's still a great place to catch a movie, but most people come to the Chinese Theatre for the hand and/or foot imprints of around 200 Hollywood stars.

La Brea Tar Pits and Museum; Back in 1875, a group of amateur palaeontologists discovered animal remains in the pits at Rancho La Brea, which bubbled with asphalt from a petroleum lake under what is now Hancock Park.

Hollywood Sign; The sign is still there and easy to see. It's a must-see when in the Hollywood area. Very visible and lots of places take a picture.

The Getty Centre; Beautiful world class museum, spectacular location and views and beautiful gardens. A real gem! In addition, admission and audio tour are free.

California Science Centre; Great views of LA and Hollywood sign. The planetarium shows were extraordinary. Highly recommended. Gift shop great range and good prices. Entrance is Free.

San Diego



San Diego is a city on the Pacific coast of California known for its beaches, parks and warm climate.

Beautiful, brilliant San Diego has the sun, the beaches, and the climate to die for. But don't let that fool you - the city is a power. It's the sixth-largest city in the U.S. Of course, it's a great place for cruise visitors. The San Diego Zoo is one of the world's best. Balboa Park is both a natural space and a collection of wonderful museums. Old Town is a colourful gaggle of shops and restaurants. Oh, and the beaches: Coronado, Mission Beach, Pacific Beach, La Jolla.

San Diego is the closest large USA town to Mexcio. The Centre is only 22 miles to the border. The Spanish influence is very evident in the architecture and gardens.

This port it has a lot to offer.

Suggestions

Try the trolley bus for a 2 hour orientation tour of San Diego.

The Old Town is lovely - you almost expect to see gun-toting cowboys to come galloping up the main street! Loads of restored and reconstructed buildings from the early settler period, many with a distinct Mexican feel. The buildings are now all shops, restaurants and little museums. It would be easy to spend a whole day here - it's well worth a visit.

Sample one of Bobboi Natural Gelato on Girard Avenue, La Jolla, As one customer put it; 'This is the most amazing gelato. The culinary artist is a charming woman who delights in watching her guests as they sampled her creations and awakened their taste buds.

Balboa Park is a nice place to a spend the morning or afternoon. There's a main block centralized with numerous tourist sites (art museum, botanical garden, science centre, etc) on either side, and a side street that takes you to more tourist sites. The area is beautifully landscaped with many of the buildings showing a Mediterranean architectural style. Walking the park is free.

USS Midway Museum; Walking around the USS Midway was eye opening to say the least. To have a ship with complete medical, dental, etc., for the servicemen was so forward thinking. The large number of retired military were everywhere to answer questions and give you the history lesson if given the opportunity.

The cruise ship terminal is at the next pier along from the Maritime Museum, so very easily walkable. Exhibits here include a nuclear submarine (decommissioned, fortunately!), the 'Star of India' clipper, and the steamboat 'Berkley', which helped evacuate residents from San Francisco when the earthquake struck in 1908.

Botanical Building and Lily Pond; These gardens are set amongst the lovely houses and gardens about 45 minutes drive from Downtown. The gardens are lovely with forest walks, and sections from all over the world.

To help you plan your visit: <https://www.sandiego.org/>

Cruise Destinations

San Francisco



You must get on top for the approached and sail under the Golden Gate Bridge.

The terminal building has fast free Wi Fi.

To get the most out of this city you must do your research, there is so much to see and do a day here is not enough. So, plan, plan and plan.

[http://www.sanfrancisco.travel/article/7-best-things-do-](http://www.sanfrancisco.travel/article/7-best-things-do-san-francisco)

[san-francisco](http://www.sanfrancisco.travel/article/7-best-things-do-san-francisco)

The main sights are quite close together and the public transport is very good. It is worth purchasing a day pass for all transport.

There is a good Hoho bus service that gives you the chance to get an overview. There are many places to pick the bus up and you should visit their web site for more information.

<http://www.viator.com/tours/San-Francisco/San-Francisco-Hop-on-Hop-off-Tour/d651-6954HOHO>

The Information desk at Pier 39 opens at 10am. <http://www.pier39.com/>

One place that everyone says you should try and visit is Alcatraz Island tour. However, there is a mixed review on how to book, some say you can turn up and book other that you must book in advance, so up to you.

You could take the cable car up and down the hills to the shopping centre of San Fransisco. Bloomingdales, Maceys and many other equally well named shops.

The Napa Valley Vintage Wine Train is one of those once-in-a-lifetime experiences for anyone who's 'done' San Francisco. It takes around 80-90 minutes to get to the station from the city, and the train trip from Napa to St Helena and back lasts about three hours. It includes wine tastings (your choice from the wine menu) with accompanying nibbles, a three-course gourmet meal that you can watch being cooked, and of course a ride on a restored vintage train through Napa Valley wine country. This is not a cheap option by any means, and tickets are very limited: you can book online at winetrain.com, and expect to pay around \$150-200 per person. The wine is not available to anyone under 21 years old, as per US laws, but soft drinks, tea and coffee are available throughout.

Santa Barbara



Santa Barbara is a city on the central California coast, with the Santa Ynez Mountains as dramatic backdrop.

With gorgeous beaches, breath-taking cliff views, delicious restaurants, world-class hotels and a vibrant arts community. Blink, and you could imagine you're on the Riviera. Perfect for a weekend escape from Los Angeles or a holiday that gives you the best of California in one spot.

Suggestions

Old Mission Santa Barbara: Incredibly well maintained historical Spanish Catholic mission structures, wall art, statues and relics. Reasonably priced tours and gift shop. Church facilities are still in use, so be sure to check in advance.

Cruise Destinations

State Street; It's hard to go wrong on state street. With a variety of shop, restaurants and fun times. State street has it all from mom and dad businesses to larger chains. With amazing architecture and art, there is always something fun and interesting to see and do on state street

The Historic La Arcada Courtyard; La Arcada was built in 1926. Today it's like a pretty outdoor mall with tile-lined walkways, fountains, sidewalk cafes and sculptures. The highlight was a fountain full of turtles.

Shoreline Park; Walk the beach or walk the path and soak in the shoreline of Santa Barbara. What a view. Its a must do if visiting.

CHILE

Easter Island



Hanga Roa is the main town, harbour and capital of Easter Island, a province of Chile. It is located in the southern part of the island's west coast,

Hanga Roa is the island's sole town. Upbeat it isn't, but with most sights almost on its doorstep and nearly all the island's hotels, restaurants, shops and services lying within its boundaries, it's the obvious place to anchor oneself. It features a picturesque fishing harbour, a couple of modest beaches and surf spots, and a few archaeological sites

This is a very peaceful island, the only Moai standing today have been re-erected either after being toppled by wars or tsunamis.

Suggestions

Ahu Akahanga; Do visit this site, these statues have not been restored like others on the island, so you can see where they have fallen, and you can wander around and see just how huge they are and the task needed to carve them and move them from the quarries.

Puna Pau; The red top-knots were made here. They represented the hair piled on top of the head.

Ahu Vaihu; It is well worth visiting all the sites on Rapa Nui, it helps give an overall impression of the huge amount of work that went into carving these statues and moving them to the sites for erection from the quarries.

UNITED KINGDOM

Pitcairn Island



This is a Tender port if the weather will allow.

If you cannot berth close then sometimes boatloads of locals made make their way to the ship to come on board to sell their wares.

HAWAIIAN ISLANDS

Hilo



Hilo is a town on Hawaii, commonly called the Big Island.

This spectacular tropical paradise is blanketed in diverse and beautiful scenery, including breath taking waterfalls and exotic gardens. Travel to 4,300 feet above sea level and visit the unique Hawaii Volcanoes National Park and discover the active volcanoes Kilauea and Mauna Loa. In Hilo itself, you'll find excellent shopping and first class restaurants.

Suggestions

Rainbow Falls; Great waterfall that's easily accessible. Close to Hilo.

Liliuokalani Park and Gardens; This is an absolutely gorgeous park, with trees blossoming in all different colors, growing right out of lava rock formations, and many animals and birds scurrying around your feet. Definitely worth exploring.

Pacific Tsunami Museum; This tiny museum is packed with information about tsunamis around the world as well as how to react and survive a tsunami. Most of this information is posted in very written exhibits around the building.

Honolulu - Oahu



Honolulu, on the island of Oahu's south shore, is capital of Hawaii and gateway to the U.S. island chain.

There is nothing whatsoever in a short walking distance of where you berth.

Suggestions

Pearl Harbour is fantastic and a must not miss, just know that it takes a while to see everything and you have to queue for the small navy boat to take you out to the memorial. Be warned that the queues start very early and are quite huge even before the place opening. Once inside you are allocated to a group. Everybody is free to roam around but you need to listen for your group being called for. As a group you go to the cinema and are shown a short documentary film before going out to the boats for the ride out to the memorial.

Best tip: if you are planning to visit Pearl Harbour is don't book a ships excursion. There are plenty of bus tours that will take you to Pearl Harbour many of which can be purchased shore side, pearl harbour is about 30 minutes away by coach. You can also share a taxi to Pearl Harbour with fellow passengers or buy a one day travel card on Hawaii's local buses for \$3.00 pp.

It's best to get to Pearl Harbour early to get tickets for the Arizona Memorial. The tickets are FREE but as you get to it by boat they only have a limited number in the day and there are long queues.

Cruise Destinations

There is a submarine excursion. There is a 6 minute sail to meet the sub in a comfortable boat. with an open area upstairs, which after a brief safety drill you are allowed to use. From the boat the views of the volcanos and crater from the top deck are fantastic. Once on the sub you will descend to a fantastic reef with all types of fish.

In Honolulu you must go and see the statue of King Kamehameha just like you see on Hawaii 50.

Try a helicopter ride over the island. You fly the route the Japanese bombers flew to surprise the Americans and destroy so many ships in Pearl Harbour.

If you are reasonably fit, a walk up to the rim of the Diamond Head Crater is well worth the effort. It takes around 45 minutes to get to the top, and it is steep and uneven in a lot of places, so not something for anyone who has dodgy knees or hips. It's also very hot, so it's essential to take water with you. But the views from the top are spectacular, there's plenty of wildlife to spot en route, and there are a few rest-points along the way. Ship-organised tours are available, but a DIY effort will cost you the price of a taxi, plus just \$1 per person to access the paths. There are toilets ("restrooms" to the Americans) and a small gift shop at the start/finish point: any profits go towards maintaining the paths. Sturdy walking shoes, water, hats and sunscreen are recommended.

If you have time you must try a margarita at Jimmy Buffets and a meal at the Spaghetti Factory, very nice, but very large.

Lahaina (Maui)



Maui is a beautiful island with lovely scenery.

An oddly eclectic mix of history, restaurants, T-shirt shops, fine art galleries and gold-by-the-foot, Lahaina is the quintessential "old-time-sea-town-turned-tourism"

This is a tender port.

Suggestions

If you get chance then Whale watching should be high on your agenda along with a visit to Hookipa beach and watch the surfers.

For you shopaholics then Wailea has big shopping area but it is about 30 miles away.

Old Fort Ruins; This is the minimally reconstructed corner of the Old Fort which dominated Lahaina Town from 1832 to 1854. It was constructed of coral blocks and sand, and at one time had 47 canons (salvaged from sunken vessels) atop its walls.

Old Lahaina Courthouse; Directly between the banyan tree and Lahaina Harbour, the Old Lahaina Courthouse was originally built in 1859 from salvaged materials taken from the palace of Kamehameha II. Current tenants include the Lahaina Heritage Museum and the Lahaina Arts Society. There is also a visitor's centre and public restrooms.

Banyan Tree; Probably the most famous landmark in Lahaina - the Banyan Tree was planted in 1873 by the Sheriff to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the first Mission.

Cruise Destinations

Other recommended places but no research done on them yet are: Seven Sacred Pool, Haleakala National Park, a nice ride to Kemah and Molokini crater.

For further information of things to do and see try here: <http://mauiguidebook.com/most-popular/lahaina-town/>

Nawiliwili, (Kauai)



Relaxing and pristine Kauai (the Garden Island) is the least commercially developed of the Hawaiian islands. Waterfalls, scenic drives and more than 60 beaches dot the landscape. Some beaches have great snorkeling, others offer child-friendly tidal pools and some are perfect for all kinds of water sports. Dry-land activities include hiking the Kalalau Trail on the Na Pali coastline, taking a day trip to Waimea Canyon and experiencing life on a sugar plantation at Grove Farm Homestead Museum.

Nawiliwili, Kauai is really the name of the harbour rather than the name of a town. The port lies outside of Lihue, the main town on Kauai. While the port resides in Nawiliwili Bay, so does Kalapaki Beach, which is the home of the Kauai Marriott Resort and Beach Club and an excellent beach as well.

It is a short walk from the pier to Harbour Mall, about a mile. The shuttle ride might take 4 or 5 minutes. There will also be taxis waiting outside the gate just in case (especially if it is raining).

Suggestions

If you have a few hours to spare, check out the Wailua river tour. It's a barge tour run by the Smith family. They take you approximately 3 miles down the Wailua river to the famous Fern Grotto. This flora and fauna excursion starts a few miles north of the cruise port in the Wailua River Valley. Visitors ride in a rowboat down the river while a guide sings local songs and tells tales about the region's cultural history. After the boat ride, everyone gets out and takes a short hike to the Fern Grotto. Expect to gasp when you get there — ferns grow upside down, and colourful, tropical plants cover every square inch of the place.

<http://www.smithskauai.com/fern-grotto/>

Safari Helicopters - Kauai is a difficult island to see in just one day (some hikes and boat trips can take hours), so helicopter tours offer the best way to see the tropical landscape. Safari Helicopters will take you along the Na Pali Coast (remember the opening credits of "Jurassic Park"?) into dramatic Waimea Canyon and through Waialeale Crater. <http://www.safarihelicopters.com/>

Na 'Āina Kai Botanical Gardens - Sitting on 240 acres in the northeast corner of the island, the gardens are open Tuesday through Friday and accessible by appointment-only tours. Families with children under 13 years old should take the "Under the Rainbow" tour, where kids can walk through a hedge maze, visit the Children's Garden, feed Koi in a lagoon, and ride on a teak wagon. <http://naainakai.org/>

Koloa Zipline - One of the newest ziplining companies on the island, Koloa Zipline is getting a lot of buzz for its jungle tours. Each starts with a "ground school" to teach participants the proper way to hold the line and control zipping gear. Then it's time to soar over tree lines and even across the Waita Reservoir.

<https://www.koloazipline.com/>

Wailua Falls is worth a look, a short taxi ride away.

Beaches

Very close to the pier is the Kauai Marriott Resort on Kalapaki Beach. Being in Nawiliwili Harbour it's protected from the rough water & appears to be a nice place to spend a couple of hours.

Cruise Destinations

Kalapaki Beach and the Anchor Cove centre are within easy walking distance from the ship and are a great way to spend a few hours. The beach has surf board, boogie board and I believe stand-up paddle board rentals. I think you can also arrange for lessons. There is a lovely Duke's restaurant on the beach where you can enjoy drinks and Hula Pie outdoors. On the walk between Anchor Cove and the beach there are several stands selling various Hawaii souvenir items. There is also a sports bar at the shopping center that looks out at the beach and they had reasonably priced drinks and a nice atmosphere (for a sports bar).

Tip: Kauai has lovely beaches, but the island is also known for serious rip currents and deceptively large waves. The risk is high, so don't swim unless a lifeguard is present.

MARQUESAS ISLANDS

Nuku Hiva



Nuku Hiva is the largest of the Marquesas Islands in French Polynesia, an overseas territory of France in the Pacific Ocean.

This huge, sparsely populated island (the second largest in French Polynesia after Tahiti) boasts a terrain of razor-edged basaltic cliffs pounded by crashing waves, deep bays blessed with shimmering, Robinson Crusoe-like beaches, dramatically tall waterfalls and lush, green valleys that feel like the end of the world. Timeless little Taiohae, with its

bay bobbing with sailboats and tattooed locals trotting through town on horseback, is the marvellous 'capital' of the Marquesas.

The island has a fascinating portfolio of archaeological sites, with more tiki (sacred statues) and tohua (open-air gathering places) than you can count, while the ancient, rock-pile ruins of house foundations called pae pae seem to inhabit every stretch of forest. Horse riding is top notch, there's exceptional hiking and there are some beautiful handicrafts available to help you remember it all.

Suggestions

Explore the Capital Of The Marquesas Islands; Home to more than half of the 3,000 strong population of Nuku Hiva, Taiohae is as action filled as things can get in the Marquesas. But that's hardly a cause for any stress, with tropical flowers blooming everywhere, friendly locals and a gorgeous setting.

Notre Dame Cathedral; This open air cathedral has some amazing wood carvings and offers quite a bit of history. The grounds are nicely manicured, though be careful standing under the breadfruit tree out front! It is a bit of a walk from the pier.

However, it has been suggested by many people to get the most out of this island then you need to do some research prior to going and book a tour.

TAHITI

Papeete



This is the capital of Tahiti and French Polynesia.

The heart and soul of the South Pacific, Tahiti is the largest in a chain of islands that make up French Polynesia. The name can either refer to the main island or the entire destination. Commonly referred to as The Islands of Tahiti, French Polynesia is a collection of 118 islands and atolls scattered across an impressive nautical surface area the size of Western Europe.

It is a beautiful island with huge waterfalls and colourful Botanical gardens. The beaches though are black volcanic sand, and the nearest white sand beach is on the island of Moorea which requires a ferry to cross to. It is know for the place where the infamous Mutiny on the Bounty took place.

The port is in the centre of the city but is vibrant. Music and dance will welcome you ashore and everyone is given a flower by ladies dressed in the colourful traditional Tahitian dress.

Suggestions

First stop when you get off is to visit the tourist office for a map.

Paofai Gardens; Nice park with a view at the harbour and the ocean. A nice place to walk or sit in Pateete town. Free entrance.

The Robert WAN Pearl Museum; A must see for everyone who loves pearls, very interesting and beautiful displays of pearls and interesting facts about the history of the pearl industry.

Territorial Assembly; The gardens are beautiful and there are Tiki statures around as well. They have some most interesting shapes.

Try a private trip to see the sights of the island. The Gorge, where Paul Gaugin bathed to get rid of his Syphillis. Then onto the Botanical Gardens, a small waterfall and a huge waterfall called Faarumai Falls. This is exceptionally noisy but is an awesome sight. Next the Arahoho Blowholes where waves force themselves through a hole in the rock then spurts it out on the other side of the road. Finally, Point Venus which is the most Northerly point and where the early navigators landed. There is a black sand beach here to dip your toes in the South Pacific Ocean.

Some cruise lines arrange for an afternoon show in the theatre by a local group of Tahitian musicians, and dancers called Tahiti Ora. Well worth seeing.

FRENCH POLYNESIA

Bora Bora



Bora Bora is a small South Pacific island northwest of Tahiti in French Polynesia. Surrounded by sand-fringed motus (islets) and a turquoise lagoon protected by a coral reef, it's known for its scuba diving.

This is a tender port and one of the most mythical islands of the Pacific. The islands are very green because of the amount of sun and rain.

Suggestions

Here you can swim with Rays and Sharks. The Rays are huge but so friendly. The sharks are a golden colour with black tips. For any non-swimmers this trip is ideal as the water is so clear and only waist deep.

The Coral Garden. This is beautiful and the different colours and formations of the Coral just breathtaking.

Get a taxi to the Sofitel and buy a day pass. This is around £35pp (2016) and includes a towel, sun bed, use of the pool and canoes if you wanted, plus a lovely two course lunch. You can pay a little more and go to their private island, but to be honest, everything you need is right there.

Motu is a small private island with a sandy beach.

Catch the shuttle bus to Bloody Mary's, which is a very famous beach bar but not actually on a beach. It is sandy outside and inside with very primitive but clean facilities. There are no sinks to wash hands but instead you pull a chain and water falls down a rock formation to wash with. A great experience.

Moorea



Mo'orea is a South Pacific island, part of French Polynesia's Society Islands archipelago. It's known for its jagged volcanic mountains and sandy beaches.

Believed to have inspired the mythical Bali Hai from James Michener's *Tales of the South Pacific*, Moorea is one of the most scenically striking islands in French Polynesia. Despite her immaculate beauty, she is far from unapproachable. Possessing a relaxed vibe and welcoming spirit, Moorea is just as warm and inviting as the Tahitians lucky enough to call

this island home.

The world's largest coral reef eco-system actually consists of 3,000 separate reefs. The island of Moorea serves as the perfect base camp for snorkelers and scuba divers seeking to come face-to-face with the diversity of life that darts among the coral. Non-swimmers can enjoy the same parade of astounding creatures from the dry perch of a glass-bottomed boat.

Suggestions

Magic Mountain; You must be on a tour to visit Magic Mountain because the land is private, but the views are worth every penny.

Lagoonarium; Sting rays, sharks, colourful fish and the amazing blue colour of the lagoon, all in one! You will get really close to see the sting-rays, they will even come to you asking for food, you can touch them and they seem very friendly! Sharks don't get close as they are scared, but you can see them very well.

Cruise Destinations

Tiki Village Cultural Centre; very colourful and exotic show. Try to dance with the performers and the fire dance is really impressive.

Raiatea



Ra'iātea, is the second largest of the Society Islands, after Tahiti, in French Polynesia. It is rich with cultural and historical significance. Believed to be the original birthplace of Polynesia, this legendary island is a secret garden of ancient myths and hidden temples. Her unique and fascinating heritage gives the island of Raiatea an intriguing sense of place.

So, paradise awaits in Raiatea. Unwind on the impossibly white sand, take a dip in the crystal clear ocean or wander the island and uncover traditional Polynesian relics.

Suggestions

The Anapa Pearl Farm; Lovely and authentic pearl farm where you can understand and learn about farming and raising pearl oysters. Be aware pearl prices are quite high.

Taputapuātea Marae; This marae (sacred place) is the most important in all French Polynesia and it's must see. It take around 25 min to drive from the main village Uturoa but it's worth it. You can visit by yourself there is no need for reservation or tickets and there are signs with more information about the history.

COOK ISLANDS

Rarotonga



Rarotonga is the largest of the Cook Islands, a nation of 15 islands in the central South Pacific.

Dominated by a once almighty volcanic pyramid, now worn down by time and streams to saw tooth peaks and razorback ridges, the lush green carpeted Rarotonga, is the capital, and the hub of the Cook Islands.

This island paradise is also the youngest island of the group, so unlike its equally enchanting sisters which have been eroded and submerged by age, Rarotonga stands brilliantly upright against the sun. Its vistas are strewn and spiked with jutting pinnacles that fall to terraces and flats planted with bananas, coconuts, paw paw and pineapples that shift into a swampy plateau marked by the inimitable taro patch.

Suggestions

Te Vara Nui Village; Enthusiastic and informative tour! Lots of pride going into the presentation. Beautiful dancing, including a few moments to teach the audience how to traditionally dance.

Cocoputt; A great thing to do after a day on the beach. A one course mini golf place. It's a good course and fun to play.

Maire Nui Botanical Gardens; the garden is modest, but very beautiful with many paths and aisles of flowering trees and shrubs. Nothing is labelled. The gardens are open with just a donation to walk through. There is a cafe that is open for lunch, but it is a little expensive.

Cruise Destinations

Punanga Nui; Great market. Has a very good vibe, relaxed and friendly. Watching the singing and dancing whilst eating tasty food and wandering about the stalls was good fun.

SAMOA

Apia



Apia is the capital and the largest city of Samoa. The harbour was the site of an infamous naval standoff in 1889 when 7 ships from Germany, the US, and Britain refused to leave the harbour when a typhoon was approaching, for fear of losing face. All the ships were sunk, except for one British cruiser.

Suggestions

Robert Louis Stevenson Museum; Home of Dr Jekle and Mr. Hyde/Treasure Island. This property is absolutely stunning and the tour is great. There is a great hike up to where he is buried. Definitely worth the visit!

Papaseea Sliding Rock; The travel down is fairly difficult so not appropriate if you have difficulty walking or even for very young children. Sometimes during the dry season, there is no water there, making the trip up to it not so worthwhile.

Pago Pago



Pago Pago is the territorial capital of American Samoa.

Beautiful place, it is a stunning sail in. You sail very slowly around Tutuila Island and into harbour. As you come ashore there is a tourist tent with maps. The locals are lovely, gracious people.

Take note it can be very humid here.

The town is quite delightful and because it is American

Samoa, very accessible with ramps, dropped kerbs etc

Suggestions

For something different try a tour on a local 'bus' - wooden benches on a lorry flatbed essentially. The guide is normally a local high school student, who is traditionally, dressed and speaks perfect English. One thing to be aware of is that the buses are very basic so don't expect luxury but it is good fun bouncing about on wood seats with no air con.

There is a lovely church there and it plays hymns through the loudspeakers in the town.

National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa; Although aimed at local children's education it is very well presented and extremely informative even if you thought you might know a thing or two about the seas.

For something to eat try Tisa's Bar and Grill.

For a nice beach for Snorkelling try Vatia Bay in National Park of American Samoa. It takes about 35 minutes by bus, cost of US\$2:25. The journey is very interesting travelling over mountains with windy roads and sheer drops at side.

THE INTERNATIONAL DATELINE



The International Date Line (IDL) is an imaginary line on the surface of the Earth, established by the International Meridian Conference of 1884 that runs from the north to the South Pole and demarcates one calendar day from the next. It passes through the middle of the Pacific Ocean, roughly following the 180° longitude but it deviates to pass around some territories and island groups.

A traveller crossing the IDL eastbound subtracts one day, or 24 hours, so that the calendar date to the west of the line is repeated after the following midnight. Crossing the IDL westbound results in 24 hours being added, advancing the calendar date by one day. The IDL is necessary to have a fixed, albeit arbitrary, boundary on the globe where the calendar date advances in the westbound direction.

TONGA

Nuku'alota



Normally an early sail in.

A short walk along the dock is the tourist stand.

For a nice beach or even snorkelling try Ha'atafu Beach on Hilufo Peninsular a protected National reserve. You will need to negotiate with the taxi drivers, but about US\$20pp is about right. It is an idyllic coral palm tree beach with sharp coral so water shoes needed. You will find waves crashing on reef protecting inner lagoons. Out at sea you will find bright

blue starfish, parrot fish, scar from Nemo, many other fish, shell fish and some live coral.

On the way there you will see the Royal Tombs, many churches, flying foxes hanging in trees on peninsular.

Niufo'ou



This is a fascinating Island, if there was ever a volcanic island it's this. 'New Coconut Island', 'Tin Can Island' call it what you will.

Nuku'alofa



Nuku'alofa is the capital of the Kingdom of Tonga.

While it may not be a perfect Pacific paradise, Tonga's capital (aka 'Dirty Nuke') has hidden charm and promise if you blow the dust from the surface. The buzzy main street leads to the broad waterfront, from where there are impressive views across the bay to coral islands, a short boat ride away.

Suggestions

Tongatapu's key archaeological sites - such as Mu'a and the Ha'amonga 'a Maui Trilithon - are on the isle's eastern side, which also features caves, calm sandy coves and the airport. To the west are the Mapu'a Vaca Blowholes and the most of the resorts and surf breaks.

There is a local island tour, palace, blowholes, city centre, it does not take long but very interesting.

Ha'amonga 'a Maui Trilithon; The South Pacific's equivalent of Stonehenge, the Ha'amonga 'a Maui (Maui's Burden) trilithon near Niutoua, is one of ancient Polynesia's most intriguing monuments.

Royal Residences; South of Nuku'alofa, between Tofoa and Pe'a, you'll pass the private royal residences of the Princess, adorned with white tigers and cannons, and the King, an austere European-style hilltop palace opposite.

Vava'u Champagne Bay



Champagne Bay. A tender port in Noumea that can just take the breath away. This beach was used in parts for filming the movie Blue Lagoon. I have been there twice, the first time, our ship docked over the other side of the island at Luganville, and we hired a mini bus to take 7 of us to Champers. When we arrived, there was only the 7 of us, and a hand full of kids and two ladies. I was hang clothes on a line, the other really was raking the beach in preparation for the next influx of tourist! The second time was different, our ship was there, and they had built frames to make market

stalls which sold colourful cheap sarongs, hand made crafts, beer and fresh lobsters! From the beach, you can hire a taxi to take you to one of the gorgeous blue holes, there are 5 on the island. Any trip to champers MUST have a blue hole visit!!<https://www.google.com.au/search...>

FIJI

Lautoka



Lautoka is the second-largest city (after Suva) of the island nation of Fiji. Located in the west, on the island of Viti Levu, Lautoka is about half an hour's drive north of Nadi and the resort-laden Denarau Island.

A busy docking port, it is known as Sugar City, a reference to its important place in the heart of the lucrative sugarcane belt. Lautoka Sugar Mill lays claim to being the largest sugar mill in the Southern Hemisphere.

Suggestions

Botanical Gardens; If you are the kind of person that appreciates botany then you would love this place. There are heaps of butterflies flying about so it sort of feels like you're in one of those gardens from children's' books and it adds to the soft (and maybe romantic) feel of the garden.

If you are thinking of a trip to Suva, it is about 4 hrs away. However, Port Denarau is only 1 hrs away.

Port Denarau (Fiji)



It is a beautiful place. Near the shore, there is a local tour operator.

For shopping, try Jacks of Fiji, they have a lot of variety and there is a Hard Rock Café for that cool drink.

Try a visit to The Westin Denarau Island, lovely catamaran to visit a tiny tropical island! Fantastic day, golden sand, blue water, palm trees. It takes about 15 mins to walk round the island! . You have a lovely lunch, watch fire dancing and

drink lots of cocktails. What more do you want, really relaxed?

There is a trip by catamaran to visit a tiny tropical island. Golden sand, blue water, palm trees. It only takes 15 mins to walk round the island. There is only 1 very small bar/hotel. A lovely lunch followed by watching fire dancing later.

Dravuni Island



Dravuni Island is one of those little patches of paradise. It has a population of a mere 150 or so, but it swells to the size of a small town when cruise ships call. Situated in the Fijian island group of Kadavu, south of the main island of Viti Levu.

It's beautiful. Just relax on the beach and swim in the pristine waters all day.

But very mixed reviews. Some cruisers loved it whilst others found it frightening.

Be prepared for baking hot weather, pickpockets and prices hiked up for the ships visit.

Cruise Destinations

Suggestions

It is an unspoilt, tiny tropical island measuring 2 kilometres long by about 0.5 kilometres wide. You could walk around it in no time, save for the rocky cliffs that come right down to the shore at both ends. You can, however, walk to its summit if you fancy a not-so-tough hike on a hot day.

Suva



Suva is kind of halfway between the Australian east coast and Hawaii. There is mixed reviews regarding it, pick pockets for example.

The first impression you get of Suva it is dirty and it is near the port. The shops and, markets stall are very near the port. The shopping in Suva is excellent and the prices are very good value.

If you've only come to Fiji for the islands and beaches then you best join the people on package tours and avoid Suva altogether. Nestled into a yawning harbour, this city is sticky with sweat and industry but it's Fiji's most concentrated confluence of ethnicities and cultures. Swimming in the urban milieu you'll discover the influence of every island and background.

There will be loads of locals touting taxi rides and tours. Mini buses doing tours etc. You can just get a taxi if you like and ask for a drive to see the sights. The taxi will take you to places that the ships tours do. And they are not expensive, not very posh looking either but they get you there and back. Haggle a price if need be. They take you to see the Presidential Palace, beaches, rural retreats, Scenery, etc. But, be careful there have been stories of tour guides claiming they are from the Local Tourist Council to ensure the tourists to the island were safe but there were a lot of rogues around that just what to rip you off. However, in the main the majority of the Fijian people are very friendly and helpful.

There is an excursion to the Pearl South Pacific Resort which is in Pacific Harbour, an hour away from Suva. You have a buffet lunch and cultural experiences. This is followed by a mini tour around Suva city.

VANUATU ISLANDS

Champagne Bay



Famous for a sweeping curve of pink-tinged sand framed against a classic south seas turquoise lagoon, Champagne Bay is perhaps the most famous of Vanuatu's beaches for good reason. It's located on the northeast coastline of Espiritu Santo and gets its name from a natural phenomenon. At low tide, when the water is shallow, it fizzes like Champagne as it passes through volcanic rocks on the sea floor.

Cruise ships dock in the bay and tender cruise passengers to a pier. For most people, it's simply enough to enjoy the sheer beauty of the beach and lagoon and go swimming; snorkelling is also a popular activity there, with reefs teeming with marine life just offshore. The laid-back locals head to the beach, too, when cruise ships are in to sell their local handicrafts and cold drinks, so it's a good place to pick up some authentic souvenirs, including baskets, mats, carvings, shell and bead necklaces, masks and bowls.

Suggestions

Because this is on the other side of the island from Luganville, the same suggestions apply.

Cruise Destinations

Wala.



Wala is a tender port in the Vanuatu islands. As you step off the pontoon, you take in all the colours. The crystal blue water, the green tropical foliage, the golden sands and the bright, colourful sarongs hanging in the markets.

The natives approach you, offering you tours, but you have to be a little wary, some of these tours are no more than a walk around the village which you could do by yourself!

The natives are friendly here, but they do come up with all sorts of ways to earn money.

One tour on offer is a small cultural tour which includes a fire starting display, piling leaves together, then putting a small boy on the leaves, and lifting him (they said this was magic, but I think it was science!!). And ceremonial dancing. I can't remember how much they charged, but it wasn't a lot, so we gave a little extra.

There are markets here, and you can buy the local Tusker beer, and freshly caught and cooked lobsters.

Luganville



Luganville is Vanuatu's 'second city', with a long, languid main road running parallel to the waterfront.

Apart from the outlook across the channel to Aore island it's not a particularly attractive town, but with a good range of accommodation, some cool cafes and kava bars, plenty of dive and tour operators and a cheerful market, it's a fun place to hang out or base yourself for trips around Santo

Suggestions

Mount Hope Waterfall; The trip is about 40 mins from Luganville. There is a lot to see on the way and you will get a glimpse of island life and conditions in the island interior. The track to the falls is well prepared with walkways and well maintained paths. 5-mins to get from carpark to falls. Quite beautiful.

Nanda Blue Hole; A little more pricey than other Blue Holes but certainly worth it. The locals obviously devote a lot of love and time into keeping this place beautiful.

Million Dollar Bay; Million Dollar Bay is about 15 min drive from Luganville, it was 150 VT to get there by local minibus and 1000VT as an entrance fee (2016). This is not only about the Americans dumping there surplus of army material in the ocean. This is about the coral slowly taking back the place, growing on all the dump, an amazing sight with lots of reef fishes (some big ones).

Magical Water Music Experience; A truly wonderful experience and truly worth the visit, the stories and overall beauty of the dancers was just magical

Mystery Island



With a name like *Mystery Island*, one might expect some deep dark secret, but as you approach this tropical gem tender port, you see it for just what it is, a little island, surrounded by crystal clear water. The island takes only about 40 minutes to walk around, and from the wharf, it only takes about two minutes to cross it to the other side. There is an airport, and a few huts, but sleeping on the island is TABU. (Perhaps the reason it is tabu to sleep there is why it is called *Mystery Island*?)

Off the coast of Australia is the *Great Barrier Reef*, which most people know is the largest reef in the world, but the second largest are the reefs around Vanuatu and Noumea, and so the swimming is good, so is the snorkelling and scuba. When we went there, people were going in the water from one end of the island, and letting the current move them around the coast. They offer tours for Fishing for the dedicated anglers.

There are the usual stalls that one comes to expect from these islands, though everything has to be bought in from the nearby larger islands, because other than the airport, there is no electricity in *Mystery Island*. Wandering through the stores is fun, and ladies were getting their hair braided for a measly \$5-10! But the highlight is the little covered rotunda in the middle of the markets, where little native kids of 4 or 5 years old, sat and sung songs with their school teachers. There is a bucket asking for donations to help fund their school, and how can one say no to such little cherubs? People were also giving the children little gifts, simple things like stickers, and pencils.

Vila



Port Vila is the harbour side capital and main hub of Vanuatu, on Efate island. Its small downtown is home to colourful market stalls selling produce and local handicrafts.

The beauty of Port Vila puts other Oceanic capitals to shame. The city was built around Vila Bay, and the French atmosphere provided by cafes and rambling streets makes it a wonderfully romantic destination. The steep hillsides offer incredible views of the harbour and its islets, inlets and lagoons, and the friendly population quickly makes the capital

feel like home.

Suggestions

Mele Cascades; The Rarru waterfalls are not spectacular but it's a pretty place where you can swim. It is \$10pp entry or 780 local currency. It is an easy walk down to the falls and the surrounds are very pretty.

The Summit Gardens; This is an awesome place to have an amazing lunch & cold beer whilst looking out over the ocean, you can also take a stroll through the well manicured gardens or even have a massage. Hired a driver from the wharf for the 30min each way drive, just be sure to negotiate your price before you get in the car to start your trip!

Underwater Post Office; The underwater post office is quite good you pay 600vatu and you get to post a postcard underwater.. note: you have to be a confident swimmer because the letterbox (where you mail it) is quite deep in high tide other than that the underwater post office and hideaway island is great highly recommended

NEW CALEDONIA

Lifou



This is a tender port.

As you walk down the pontoon to the shore, you may notice green sea turtles in the surf! The water is beautiful, as it is in most places in that area. There is a short walk to the markets, which sell pretty much the same sort of stuff that most places sell, just a little dearer.

There are taxis waiting to take you on tours of the island. These 2 tours are good, the Vanilla Plantation & the Chief's

Hut.

Beware: Some locals try and get money for everything and anything. The walk up to churchbon hill is great. However, some locals try to charge tourists for the walk. If you are into diving/snorkelling then beware; some people have paid for diving tours and snorkelling tours, and when they went to where you were supposed to do those things, the natives were charging A\$50 to go into the water. It is nothing more than a pathetic money grab, which marred Lifou for many.

These 2 tours are recommended - Vanilla Plantation & The Chief's Hut.

Mare



Mare pronounced Mar-ray is one of the 4 islands that make up the Loyalty group. It is a relatively new addition and not nearly as developed as many of the other islands in the Noumea/Vanuatu area. The residents of this island are very friendly and French speaking.

Despite regular visits by cruise ships, Mare remains largely off the tourist track, which has helped maintain it as a tropical paradise. Palm trees overhang the crystal-clear waters surrounding the island, and Yejele Beach, with its

pristine white sands, is a highlight.

A market selling local wares greets cruisers dockside. Thatched-roofed villages dot the island, and there is little in the way of traffic on the roads. Go for a wander, and take in the lovely views of the bay. The French-speaking locals, in their colourful dress, are always willing to return a smile and a "bonjour."

Mare is a tender port, and as the tender takes you to the dock, it seems like just a typical island stop. However, there is almost a festive feel in the air, and you start to realise, this truly is an island paradise. When you arrive at Mare, you arrive at Tardine Bay. At the dock and just a few meters to the right is the town hall, and then the small market place. The fare in the markets is similar and around the same prices as Lifou and Noumea.

Catch the bus across to the beach, it takes about 10 minutes to get to Yedjele, take your hat and sunscreen, because this place is beautiful, and you wouldn't want to have to cut your day short! There are so many words to describe this beach, gorgeous, paradise, heaven just to name a few! The water is crystal clear and the reefs protect this pristine beach from waves. There are a few vendors along the beach, and you can buy cocoa nuts with straw in them so you could drink the milk and delicious kebabs on skewers, with some sort of French bread of course!

All in all a beautiful island.

Noumea



Noumea is the capitol of New Caledonia, a group of islands in the south pacific.

Noumea has a reputation and you really do not want to walk around by yourself, it doesn't feel safe, and pick pockets abound.

If you do disembark then at the wharf is a square building that you must walk through, the bottom has lots of tour places, vying for your tourist dollars, so if you want to save

cash, this is where you should book your tours. If you go to the top of the building, there is a little market that sells local made souvenirs.

When you exit the building, you are next to a busy road and a major bus stop. This is also where you catch the famous Green train, or its cheaper rival, the Yellow train. These are not actually trains at all, but basically cars made to look like trains, and have half a dozen carriages on the back. The train takes you up to a look out, as well as many other places of interest. This is a great way to see the city, and safe.

Suggestions

Amedee Lighthouse Island; Beach chairs, buffet lunch, a nice shop, and plenty of shade. The water is amazing to sit and relax in, and a glass bottom boat.

Tjibaou Cultural Centre; This centre has the most spectacular architecture, is in lush bush and tells the story of the island's indigenous people in a simple and special way. A must do.

Fol Hill; Walking paths criss-cross the hill, or there's the road up. Busses don't down go up here but will drop you at the bottom if you prefer bus/walk to an organised tour. Great 360 degree views from the top.

Isle of Pines



This is a tender port. However, this is also one of those ports that can have rough seas so you cannot tender.

If you do get in then many say it is one of the most beautiful of the South Pacific islands. There is a place called Natural Aquarium.

NEW ZEALAND

Akaroa



Akaroa is a small town on Banks Peninsula in the Canterbury region of the South Island of New Zealand,

Akaroa, with its own beautiful bays and harbour and French and English history has an enormous range of activities

Suggestions

A Classic Tour; Honda GoldWing motorbike & sidecar sightseeing. Tours from 30 minutes to 4 hours. Prices start at \$90 for 30 mins for 2 people.

Akaroa Dolphins-Nature Harbour Cruises; a very personal nature cruise around Akaroa Harbour and headlands. View the spectacular landforms of this ancient volcanic crater; see fascinating bird life, seals, penguins and Hector's dolphins, the world's smallest and rarest.

The Giants House; Very nice and peaceful garden. The mosaic work is incredible and really worth a visit. Interesting for all age groups, but a little steep road to get into it, so not a place for people who has a problem with walking.

Auckland



Auckland, based around 2 large harbours, is a major city in the north of New Zealand's North Island.

Normally you dock in the Centre of Auckland although it is possible that you could be about a half mile out of the centre opposite the Vector Areana if there are other ships in port.

On going ashore you are only allowed to take commercially bottled water. There are the usual maps and information stands. The city is easy to walk around, good transport.

There are lots of souvenir stores with currency exchange selling the same items. Streets quite dirty with chewing gum.

Suggestions

Take the Ho-Ho bus for a tour around Auckland. The bus stop is right outside the ferry terminal building. Be aware though that if you only have a limited time that you probably will not have sufficient time to do both loops of the tour and visit the museum (which is well worth a visit in its own right - it is about a 30 minute walk from the ferry terminal or you can get the bus).

Visit Rotoura, the stinkiest place in the world, where the earth's crust is at its thinnest and the sparkling geological features that go with it.

Try a trip to Kelly Tarlton's Sea Water Life and Scott of Antarctica expedition. There is a free bus which you cannot miss as it has an enormous Shark on top. The first exhibition is a mockup of Scott's hut and there are boards to tell the story of his life and research in Antarctica. Following this there is a large Antarctic penguin display. The shark tunnel is filled with New Zealand's largest collection of sharks. Many more displays of underwater life including Sea Horses and Spiny Sea Dragons. There is a huge 12 foot long squid in a glass case. You can pre book your tickets.

Cruise Destinations

You can wander along Queens Street and into the shopping mall. Everything here is huge and immaculately clean. It all looks brand new. Maybe even consider going up the sky tower - but if you are intent on "throwing yourself off" then you would need to book in advance and even then it would be subject to the weather conditions on the day. If you want to go up to the observation gallery then, unless you are eating in the restaurant or throwing yourself off, there is a charge.

You can take the ferry to the Historic suburb of Devonport. This is a very quaint little town. Try the three horse and cart on a short trip around the town. The driver is 86 years old and keeping this tradition of driving the Horse and cart around Devonport was keeping him going.

If when you exit the ferry terminal you turn right and follow the coastline for about two miles you will come to the new naval museum which is free to enter and has a coffee shop. Alternatively for the more energetic you can after leaving the ferry terminal cross the road and head up the main street bearing right at the top and climb up Mount Victoria from where you will have some spectacular views of Davenport and Auckland.

The town library provides free Internet.

Bay of Islands



The Bay of Islands cruise destination is New Zealand's finest maritime park and comprises 144 islands, myriad bays and beaches around the coastline.

The Bay, with its subtropical climate and pristine natural environment, has an abundance of marine life, including the big marlin, whales, penguins, dolphins, gannets and many other species. And although it's an aquatic playground for adventure activities and escapist relaxation, much of Northlands extensive coastline remains unspoilt.

The maritime and historic park is the original cradle of local European civilization, but it also boasts fine examples of the fascinating Maori culture. Cruises to Bay of Islands also include tours to several museums filled with fine examples of European and Maori history, which provide a unique insight into colonial New Zealand. In fact, you will find that the Maori culture is still very much alive in this region, as 32 percent of the population is Maori. The shopping, dining and entertainment possibilities that stem from this distinctive local culture, which embraces art, creativity, organic farming and alternative thinking, is quite unique, making Bay of Islands cruises a must see.

This is a tender port. The nearest town is called Pahia. This is a one street town with lots of touristy shops and restaurants.

Excursions:

The Ultimate Combo: A visit to the Waitangi treaty grounds. This is the place where Maori Chiefs and the British Crown signed the Treaty of Waitangi. A flag pole marks the exact spot where it was signed on the 6th February 1840. This includes a guided tour and a Ceremonial Performance. The grounds are 500 hectares and are filled with unusual plants trees and shrubs.

You start off at NGATOKIMATAWHAORUA known as the Waka House which houses the world's largest ceremonial canoe, elaborately carved and made totally by hand. Then onto the Treaty house where James Busby resided and drew up the treaty. You finish the tour at the impressively carved Meeting House were you are greeted by the dancers in traditional ceremonial dress. The ceremony lasts over $\frac{1}{2}$ hour they fill that time with traditional singing and dancing.

Dunedin



Dunedin is a city in New Zealand, at the head of Otago Harbour on the South Island's southeast coast. It's known for its Scottish and Maori heritage.

Known as the Edinburgh of New Zealand, Dunedin is the country's city of the south, wearing its Scottish heritage with pride. Surrounded by dramatic hills and at the foot of a long, picturesque harbour, Dunedin is one of the best-preserved Victorian and Edwardian cities in the Southern Hemisphere.

Suggestions

Try a drive up the Otago Peninsula - the views are endless and the beaches are beautifully rugged. Nestled at the foot of Taiaroa Head is the Royal Albatross Centre, the only place in the world on the mainland where you can view Northern Royal Albatross in their natural habitat. On Dunedin's doorstep you will also find incredible wildlife including the world's rarest penguin colonies. Take one of the recommended "Eco tours" to see a wide variety of wildlife. Bull seals, albatrosses, penguins . The list goes on.

Toitu Otago Settlers Museum; this excellent museum is free entry. It is good and very informative . There is street scenes where there are old photos and by pressing a button the up to date scene of the same location is imposed side by side .

Dunedin Railway Station; This station is wonderful maintained with a beautiful public garden in front of it. Also the inside is worth a visit, with its magnificent central hall and staircases.

Oveston House was built in the early 1900s by an incredibly wealthy man and was gifted lock, stock and barrel to Dunedin by the last surviving member of his family. It's a real step back in time, albeit a luxurious one as the house was built with an electricity supply, modern kitchen and bathroom fittings, internal and external telephone systems, and even central heating. All very interesting, helped by a knowledgeable guide.

The Botanical Gardens are huge - you could easily spend a day here as there is plenty to see. The gardens are built onto a hillside, so the rockery garden is particularly good. If you manage it, the steep walk up to the top of the hill takes you to a large aviary. There's also a café and information centre, though no gift shop. Easily accessed by several of the local bus services.

Excursion

'Dunedin Highlights'. First stop is the railway station then onto Oveston House. The final stop is at the Botanical Gardens, which are huge. Where you have about an hour to have a wander around, but to be honest you could easily spend a day here.

Gisborne



Gisborne is a city in northeastern New Zealand and the largest settlement in the Gisborne District.

Gisborne is the first city in the world to greet the sun each morning, and it has a reputation for great food, wine and surf beaches.

Suggestions

Titirangi Domain; From the top you overlook Gisborne and the bay with great views on a sunny day. There is also a status of James Cook.

Tairāwhiti Museum; An excellent local museum and a very informative exhibition of the local Maori tribe - Rongowhakaata. Beautiful location by the river

Sunshine Brewery; When you have gotten over the great location and made your way inside, the beers will blow you away. There is a huge selection on tap, with plenty bottled for you as well.

FJORD NATIONAL PARK

One of the most dramatic and beautiful parts of New Zealand; the power of Fiordland's scenery never fails to enthral travellers. This remarkable natural environment features stunning fiords, spectacular waterfalls and snow-capped peaks.

Milford Sound (Cruise)



Deep within Fiordland National Park lies New Zealand's most stunning natural attraction: Milford Sound.

Milford Sound was carved by glaciers during the ice ages and is breath-taking in any weather. The fiord's cliffs rise vertically from the dark waters, mountain peaks scrape the sky and waterfalls cascade downwards, some as high as 1000 metres. When it rains in Milford Sound, and it often does, those waterfalls multiply with magnificent effect.

Boat cruises are an excellent way to experience the Sound. Adventurous types might also like to head out sea kayaking, diving or flightseeing. To learn more about the local marine life, visit the underwater observatory at Harrison Cove and marvel at the black coral, 11-legged sea stars and delicate anemones.

Cruise Milford; really stand for its promise of not being an overcrowded experience. Although it is a small boat there is plenty of room to move around. The guides are really friendly and informative.

Doubtful Sound, (Cruise)



Doubtful Sound (discovered by Captain Cook in the 1700s) is the deepest and second largest fiord in New Zealand's Fiordland National Park. It's a vast and breathtaking wilderness of rugged glacier-carved mountains, carpeted with dense and bountiful rainforest, which is broken every now and then by a spectacular waterfall thundering into the water below. Its three distinct winding arms and numerous islands set this fiord apart from its sisters. Enjoy the peace and tranquillity as you drink in the sheer scale and beauty of this place and marvel at the power of Mother Nature.

Dusky Sound (Cruise)



As you glide into the still waters of New Zealand's largest fiord you'll be gazing upon the exact same sight as Captain Cook witnessed over 240 years before you when he discovered Dusky Sound (or Dusky Bay as he named it) for the first time. Its remote location has ensured that Dusky Sound remains wonderfully unspoilt and it's therefore still the perfect spot to see a wonderful array of bird and sea life and you'll have the very best view from your ship as you gently make your way deeper into the sound.

Napier



Napier, a coastal city on New Zealand's North Island, is set amid the renowned wine-producing region of Hawke's Bay. Rebuilt after a 1931 earthquake, the city is known for art deco landmarks like the zigzag-patterned Daily Telegraph Building. Along the tree-lined waterfront promenade the Marine Parade, the Pania of the Reef statue, which depicts a Maori maiden, is a symbol of the city.

Napier is one of New Zealand's most attractive cities, located at the south of the Hawkes Bay, just 20 minutes out of Hastings. Palm trees line the inner-city streets and the wonderfully sculpted Marine Parade, as the name suggests, runs along the shore of the city. Along Marine Parade various parks, gardens and memorials give the water's edge its distinct character, and you'll also find the i-SITE Visitor Centre and various local attractions.

Suggestions

Hawke's Bay Express: if you are looking for an outstanding way to get to know the sunny Art Deco Capital - Napier, one of our daily tours is your answer. The Express will take you on your journey in affordable style. With our informative and quirky commentary, outlining the history of the 1931 earthquake and the city's subsequent Art Deco rebuilding, you will learn all about the city and region, about life and culture in New Zealand; you'll hear about some local legends and the achievements of great New Zealanders, and you will gain an understanding of the Bay's history and personal stories from the fifth generation Hawke's Bay family owners.

Hawkes Bay Scenic Tours & Napier Wine and Brewery Tours, Price: starting from NZ \$55.00 per person. Presenting three quality tour types; Wine; Wine & Brewery and also our Napier Art Deco City Tours. These are designed to cater to the Cruise industry.

Pahia



Pahia is the main tourist town in the Bay of Islands in the far north of the North Island of New Zealand.

Suggestions

Pahia is a great place to explore all of the Bay of Islands.

Swim with the dolphins. Go kayaking, swimming, fishing, or picnic along secluded beaches. Walk or drive to the spectacular Haruru Falls. Learn about early New Zealand history where the Treaty of Waitangi was first signed. Discover authentic Maori culture.

Take the ferry to 'Romantic Russell', visit the bustling but relaxed town of Kerikeri, check out the world famous Hundertwasser toilets in Kawakawa, and the historic Pioneer Village in nearby Kaikohe.

Or just chill out and take a cruise through the famous 'Hole in the Rock'. Bus tours can take you to see 2,000 year old Tane Mahuta - a majestic lord of the Waipoua Kauri Forest. Or go further north to Cape Reinga - the departing place of the spirits in Maori legend.

Picton



The picturesque seaside town of Picton is the South Island base for the ferry service that links the main islands of New Zealand. It's also the gateway to the marine, forest and island attractions of the Marlborough Sounds. Built around a very sheltered harbour, the town has an attractive seafront dotted with cafés, restaurants and various types of galleries. There's also a floating maritime museum and an aquarium.

Suggestions

Picton is all about the Marlborough Sounds with its relaxed island feel, secluded bays and crystal clear waters. The waterfront has one of the world's best water views known for its ever changing colours and its marinas are a stunning testament to the importance of boats to this charming waterside village. Regular boat trips from Picton's waterfront jetties take you to stunning locations throughout Queen Charlotte Sound

Eco World Aquarium; EcoWorld Picton Aquarium is home to many different fish species from the Marlborough Sounds, as well as Little Blue penguins, Mystical Seahorse, Ancient Tuatara, Giant Weta, Lizards, Turtles and Kakariki.

Port Chalmers



Port Chalmers is a suburb and the main port of the city of Dunedin, New Zealand,

A short drive, 15 kilometres northeast, from Dunedin, historic Port Chalmers offers an interesting mix of heritage attractions, cafés and galleries.

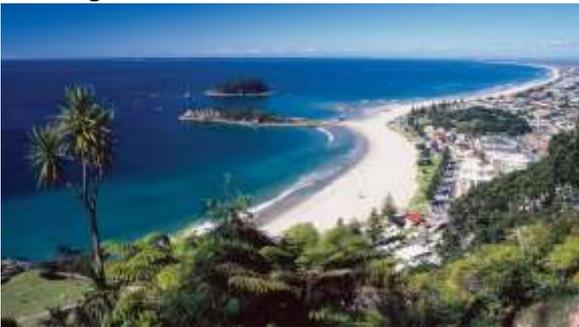
Port Chalmers Cruise Ship Passenger Attractions

If you are embarking on a cruise ship holiday and will be visiting Port Chalmers, New Zealand, be sure to plan your onshore activities while your ship is berthed in port. Discover the best places in Port Chalmers - there are numerous activities that you and your group can do while onshore, and you are limited only by the time that your ship will be berthed. Go on a city sightseeing tour, a nature discovery tour, or enjoy an exhilarating Jet Boat ride. Many tour and activity companies specialize in port pick-up and drop-off.

Link: <http://www.tourism.net.nz/region/dunedin/dunedin---port-chalmers/attractions-and-activities/cruise-ship-passenger-attractions>

Port Chambers is a port for Dunedin

Tauranga



Tauranga is a harbour side city in the Bay of Plenty region on New Zealand's North Island.

Downtown Tauranga has several historically significant areas to view during a scenic walk around the area. The Strand waterfront area is modern and always buzzing, and is home to a number of cafés, restaurants and pubs.

Suggestions

Mount Maunganui Summit Track; This walk is a must. All worthwhile when you reach the summit. Fantastic views and not so challenging at all.

McLaren Falls Park; The entire park encompasses a walk up to a waterfall, lots of places to stop at around the dam at the top and of course an animal park with quite a few different animals.

Tauranga Waterfront Sculptures; This display creates a true bonus of fun for both children and adults alike, and a welcome glimpse into the life of a fabulous New Zealander who Tauranga can proudly claim.

A tour including a visit to the kiwifruit orchards is worthwhile, especially if it includes a 'hospitality' stop. There's loads of kiwi-based products to try and buy, not just edibles and drinkables, but things like body creams and lotions, candles, kitchen items. Even toys and jigaw puzzles for the children.

Wellington



Wellington, the capital of New Zealand, sits near the North Island's southernmost point on the Cook Strait. A compact city, it encompasses a waterfront promenade, sandy beaches, a working harbour and colourful timber houses on surrounding hills.

Nestled between a sparkling harbour and rolling green hills, New Zealand's capital city is renowned for its arts, heritage, culture and native beauty.

Suggestions

The biggest and best museum in NZ is here 'Museum of New Zealand (Te Papa Tongarewa)' It is a great place and you can spend hours there, very interactive,

Wellington Botanic Garden: Set atop Wellington City, the garden offers an opportunity to explore specialist zones featuring Australian gardens, fragrant gardens, rose gardens, succulents and many more. Walking trails are edged with huge what look like centuries old trees, and every now and then you are reminded of your location with uninterrupted glimpses of the spectacular Wellington harbor. The walk down to the city from the garden is well worth it - a short 10/15 minutes and you're back in town.

Mount Victoria: Fantastic 360 degree view overlooking the city. Uplifting and exhilarating.... Great space to be quiet and reflect

Both Mount Victoria and the Botanical Gardens are accessed by cable car/tram.

A suggested DIY is get the shuttle bus into the city that will drop you about a 5 minute walk from the cable car. Try and get there early before all the crowds arrive. Instead of returning by cable car try walking down through the magnificent Botanical Gardens. Then onto Lady Norwoods Rose Garden and have a drink overlooking the magnificent gardens before making your way through the Bolton St cemetery and back into the city centre via the Parliament building known as the Beehive.

Allow a good two to three hours for a visit to the Zealandia Wildlife Sanctuary on the outskirts of the city. There's several walks you can follow, depending on your fitness/mobility levels, all marked on a guide map and well-signposted. The paths are well maintained, but they ARE forest paths, so uneven and mostly unpaved. It's the perfect place for bird lovers, although there are reptiles and insects here too, all of them endangered species. 45-minute long guided tours are run a couple of times a day, which is a chance to learn more about the wildlife in the park, but the guide map by itself is pretty helpful. There's an exhibition hall and gift shop at the entrance/exit, and the café makes a wonderful carrot cake!

AUSTRALIA

All the Australian ports are very well organised with their information.

GREAT BARRIER REEF - AUSTRALIA

Fabulous white sand beaches, tropical forests, amazing swimming and snorkelling, the Whitsunday Islands and nearby Barrier Reef are the perfect holiday islands. The resorts on the islands of Hamilton, Hayman and Lindeman provides superb retreats.

Adelaide



Adelaide is South Australia's cosmopolitan coastal capital.

The capital city of South Australia is simply enchanting, a treasure trove of shopping, fine arts, gastronomy and outdoor activity. Adelaide is the heart of the world's opal industry, selling gorgeous stones from South Australian mines.

The Port Adelaide docks are approx 45 minutes outside the city. There is normally a shuttle bus provided. At the Port

there is free Wi Fi, just follow the crew.

The city is only one mile square and has numerous parks and many feel is far more impressive than Melbourne.

Suggestions

There is a pendolino-type train that runs from where the ship docks (station is called Outer Harbor) into Adelaide city centre. It stops at Port Adelaide en route. Tickets are bought from a machine on the train, but will only take coins (no notes) or cards. Around A\$8 for a day's unlimited travel, less for OAPs, students and children.

For wonderful views across the city to the sea, head for Mount Lofty in the Adelaide Hills. There's a good café and a gift shop at the summit, which is 710m above sea level. Make sure you take a jumper, as even on hot and sunny days the wind up there can be cold.

Adelaide Oval; the tour covers the history of the venue, cricket, aussie rules and everything else that occurs there. The Sir Donald Bradman collection is unique and a must do.

North Terrace; Take a stroll down the North Terrace and take in everything from the railway station to the Jam Factory, Ayers' House and the South Australia Art Gallery. A great way to get to know Adelaide.

The Rundle Mall Pigs; A cute display for the mall to have the life size pigs. Photo op for people of all ages. You don't expect to see pigs in a shopping area.

Adelaide Botanic Garden; Laid out along classic England park lines but with better attention to detail and Oz tree specimens.

The Cleland Wildlife Park. The scenery is stunning and there are many signs to warn drivers to slow down because of the wild Koalas living in the trees.

Cruise Destinations

Visit Hahndorf, this is where the first German immigrants settled in Australia, and the little town is still very Germanic in feel. Plenty of artisan shops and cafes selling German food, drink and non-food items, and there's even a couple of places where you can indulge in a (free) wine tasting session. Look out for the little Heritage Walk, which is only a couple of hundred yards long, but includes some fairly detailed historical information boards.

Think about hiring a car for the day. This should set you back about AUD\$40. This will give you more freedom if you are looking at going outside the city. For car hire in Adelaide call Jonathon from Ace Car Hire on 0403 329 402. He is ever so helpful and will bring the car to Rundle Mall near to where the shuttle drops you off.

Adelaide Brochures And Tourism Maps: <http://southaustralia.com/en/places-to-go/adelaide/brochures-and-maps>

Airlie Beach (Whitsunday Islands)



Airlie Beach, an Australian resort town on Queensland's Whitsunday Coast. The Whitsundays is a world renowned holiday destination, with Whitsunday icons like the Great Barrier Reef, Heart Reef and Whitehaven Beach at the top of millions of bucket lists the world around. Airlie Beach is the hub of the Whitsundays region, being the largest town on the Whitsunday Coast, almost entirely focused on tourism.

The main street is called Shute Harbour Road, and boasts dozens of businesses including unique retail and chainstores, newsagents, restaurants and cafes, tour desks and art galleries.

For ideas of what is on offer for your time in port try here:

<http://www.tourismwhitsundays.com.au/destinations/airlie-beach/what-to-do/>

Beaches

Airlie Beach; Airlie Beach itself is located in the centre of town along the esplanade overlooking Pioneer Bay to Hayman Island. The palm tree lined beach is the perfect spot to sunbake by day, enjoy the sunset and then devour fish and chips on the sand by night. There are covered picnic tables, free BBQs to enjoy and a childrens playground. On Saturday mornings, Airlie Beach becomes a mecca for shoppers, with the Airlie Beach markets lining the foreshore, offering Whitsunday produce, clothing, local arts and crafts, snacks, coffee and live entertainment.

Boathaven Beach; Boathaven Beach is a new beach opened in 2011, and is located at the Port of Airlie at the Eastern end of town. Boathaven Beach has been engineered to be all tidal, so it remains sandy in all tides. It has a stinger net for swimming in the high risk stinger season (view more details on stinger season) and is open to the public every day.

Shingley Beach; Shingley Beach can be accessed from Shingley Drive and is surrounded by lovely parkland and views of Abell Point Marina. The beach is only a 3 minute drive away from Airlie Beach and is also part of the beautiful Bicentennial Boardwalk. The beach is a great spot for a picnic or BBQ, and an ideal spot to put a kayak in or have a go at stand-up paddle boarding.

Cannonvale Beach; Just a few minutes out of Airlie Beach you will find it's quieter, lesser known but just as beautiful cousin Cannonvale. Cannonvale Beach is situated at the end of the Bicentennial boardwalk and can also be accessed via Beach Road. At low tide, kids can play in the sand, fish from the beach and at high tide, there is easy access for swimming (with a stinger net installed during high risk season). Several picnic tables line the beach and you can often find locals 'cooking up a barbie' or having Fish and Chips at the beach.

Cruise Destinations

Airlie Beach Lagoon; The lagoon in the centre of Airlie Beach provides the perfect spot to relax, play or cool-down amidst beautiful parklands. It is the hub of Airlie Beach with stunning views overlooking the Coral Sea and it has its own sandy beach. The lagoon offers supervised, stinger-free swimming all year round and facilities such as playgrounds, BBQs and table tennis provide free entertainment for all. Soak up the beautiful atmosphere, the great views and forget about your every-day stresses!

Albany



The breath-taking beauty of Albany's rugged coastline creates a fitting backdrop to a dramatic whaling, convict and settler history and a sensational south coast adventure.

This charming city marks the spot where the first European settlers set foot in Western Australia, and much of their legacy remains today with around 50 colonial buildings standing proudly as museums, galleries and restaurants. From convict prisons, whaling ships and taverns to quaint cottages and grand National Trust residences

Suggestions

Take in almost two centuries of history on a 30-minute self-guided walk, following the Amity Trail.

http://australiacaravanadventures.weebly.com/uploads/2/8/0/1/28019167/albany_walktrail.pdf

The Albany Convict Gaol & Museum; This place is great and will give you an insight about how prisoners fared in the early days. All of the building has its original walls, cells and most of the material inside is dated from the time it was a goal.

Padre White Lookout; This lookout has great views of the Bay and on a clear sunny day is good for lots of photos.

Brisbane



Brisbane, capital of Queensland, is a large city on the Brisbane River.

To the south are the high-rise hotels which make up the exciting Surfers' Paradise and Gold Coast resorts, while to the north there is the beautiful and more sedate Sunshine Coast.

Suggestions

Mount Coot-tha Lookout; If you want the best view of the city and the surroundings, this is the place to go as it gives the best vantage point.

Brisbane Botanic Gardens Mt. Coot-tha; So much to see here, gardens well kept And interesting. Well worth a visit. Lovely walkways and huge array of plants.

Cultural attractions in downtown Brisbane are located in and around the South Bank Parklands by the Brisbane River - site of the 1988 World Expo. In close proximity you will discover the Queensland Museum and the State Art Gallery, which features many Aboriginal works. Shore excursions from our cruises to Brisbane also include the Butterfly House and Maritime Museum.

Cruise Destinations

The best shopping can be found at the Myer Centre complex on the city's central commercial artery, Queen Street. While enjoying your Brisbane cruise walk south to admire the fine architecture around the former Treasury building and then discover the imaginatively landscaped Botanic Gardens.

Classic Australian pastimes such as surfing and swimming from sensational beaches - that is what you will find on the coastline surrounding Queensland's capital and cruise port Brisbane. Cruises here bring to your holiday a balance of both nature and elegant grounds.

Broome



Broome is a beach resort town in Western Australia's Kimberley region. Affectionately known as the 'pearl of the north', it's the home of South Sea pearls

Not to be upstaged, Mother Nature has blessed Broome with 22 kilometres of beautiful white sand and turquoise water at Cable Beach and striking rust-red cliffs and ancient dinosaur footprints at Gantheaume Point.

Suggestions

Willie Creek Pearl Farm; Everything you want to know about pearl farming. The visit is well worth it if you want to learn the nitty-gritty of pearl culture, the oysters, the seeding, the oyster beds and the very instructive introduction to the topic by the host.

Gantheaume Point; The view is stunning. The Indian Ocean is a brilliant sparkling turquoise. Definitely worth a visit. It is only about 5ks from the centre of town.

Sacred Heart Church; Lovely location, lots of history. Uniquely decorated with Pearl Shells. Very tranquil environment.

Burnie (Tasmania)



Burnie is Tasmania's most westerly city, located on the North West Coast about 40 minutes from Devonport. It has a northerly aspect and is nestled around Emu Bay on Bass Strait. When founded in 1827, Burnie was named Emu Bay.

Burnie's hills hide impressive gardens and parks, and it is surrounded by beautiful beaches, sparkling water and fresh air.

Suggestions

Makers Workshop; This building combines a café (with a great view), the tourist information centre and craft exhibits as well as providing paper making workshop tours.

Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden; Slow down your pace and stroll these amazing gardens with water features and bridges. It is on different levels so good shoes recommended. They also have a golf cart around for those unable to walk the inclines. The tea room available has lovely volunteers who are only happy to serve you home cooking. A garden well worth a visit...allow some time though.

Hellyers Road Distillery; Take the time to visit this boutique distillery while you're visiting Tasmania. Great facility tour and tasting for a reasonable price.

Cruise Destinations

Guide Falls Reserve; Not too far out of Burnie and into the beautiful countryside. Nature at its finest. It is an easy climb to top of falls. Multiple waterfalls with beautiful scenery. There are public toilets here.

Fern Glade Reserve; Just a short drive from Burnie CBD you will find this lovely little oasis next to the river. Enjoy a leisurely stroll along the path next to the river and watch the wildlife.

Busselton



Busselton is a regional city in the South West region of Western Australia.

Nestled in Geographe Bay, 229km south of Perth, Busselton has beautiful beaches, excellent fishing, caves, coastline scenery, unspoiled bushland surrounds and world-class wineries are all in close proximity to this delightful seaside town. Busselton is one of West Australia's earliest settlements and northern gateway to the Margaret River Wine Region, offering a diverse range of attractions and

accommodation.

Suggestions

Busselton Jetty; Take a 1.8-kilometre stroll or train ride over the Indian Ocean on the longest timber-piled jetty in the southern hemisphere. Make sure when you get off you have a quick walk to the very end and get a few photos of the actual size painted whales on the jetty and also a photo of the sign as to where you are in the world!! It costs AS\$3 per adult to access and there are a few spots on the way out that stairs run down to water level platforms. There are some strategically placed covered benches to rest and shelter from the sun, or short rain shower that may blow over. Toilets and kids area out at the end.

Busselton Jetty Underwater Observatory; The Underwater Observatory can be likened to a giant reverse fish bowl, with people on the inside, looking out at the underwater wonderland. Colourful ancient corals, multitudes of various fish, dolphins or even seals can be sighted through massive windows of the three levels of the Underwater Observatory beneath the Indian Ocean.

Busselton Museum; excellent Museum. It is a wonderful collection of "Yesteryear" and will bring back many memories. A lot of the items you are allowed (and even encouraged) to touch and handle. There are a few TVs set up around the place giving talks and demonstrations on how things were done. You can spend several hours here.

Cairns



Cairns, considered the gateway to Australia's Great Barrier Reef, is a city in tropical North Queensland. Once a sleepy sugar-milling town, it's now a destination for sailing, diving and snorkelling.

Suggestions

Esplanade Boardwalk; The Esplanade is a great place to spend some time while in Cairns. Sit and nature watch, plenty of birdlife at any time of the day, enjoy the view, a good place to see the planes taking off from Cairns airport. A very nice walking Broadway or for the more active, a great bicycle and running track. Also free wifi hot spots, look for the wifi towers for best reception.

Cruise Destinations

Boat Tours in Cairns; to and from the Great Barrier Reef. You will have to make direct enquires about these trips and they will be dependent on your time in port.

Cairns Botanic Gardens; You must do the Botanical Gardens when you visit Cairns. Best of all it is FREE. A few different walks, but well worth the time. Opposite the botanical gardens they have the rainforest walk, it's part track, part grass, bridge and boardwalk.

Kuranda Scenic Railway; Great day out taking the scenic railway up to Kuranda, and cable car back down. The ride up the mountain takes about 1 hour 30mins. Again, you will have to weigh up the amount of time you have in port.

Darwin



Darwin is capital of the Northern Territory and gateway to Kakadu National Park, Australia's largest. It's known as a laid-back blend of frontier outpost and modern city. At its heart is the Smith Street pedestrian mall, notable for shops selling Aboriginal art and crafts, South Sea pearls, opals and diamonds.

Suggestions

Museum & Art Gallery; Really worth the visit. Lots of things for the kids to see. A room where you can experience the force of the cyclone that actually destroyed the original museum.

Australian Aviation Heritage Centre; Worth a visit, particularly if you are into history and aircraft. The B52 is enormous.

Darwin Botanic Gardens; Great for those interested in Tropical plants. Several different walks that take you through a variety of gardens, take some water with you.

Eden



Eden is a quiet former whaling town located on the southern coast of New South Wales. This sleepy settlement's rugged cliffs, rolling hills, national parks and areas of breath-taking natural beauty are a joy to explore, while it's beautiful beaches are the perfect place to relax and look out for whales that often swim close to the shore.

Perched on the edge of magnificent Twofold Bay - the third deepest natural harbour in the southern hemisphere

Suggestions

Eden Gateway Visitor Information Centre; Fabulous centre with everything you need for visiting near and far. The interior was well presented and invited you to stay inside for a while. Staff were extremely friendly and informative. Drop in at the start of your holiday to get the best out of your stay.

Killer Whale Museum; Good local museum, with interesting facts and figures about the local whale hunting industry, which is, thankfully, now closed down. No great hi-tech displays, but plenty enough to make you think. Well worth combining with a whale watching trip.

Ben Boyd Tower; An amazing piece of history and architecture! Well worth a visit. A short walk from the car park is worth it to see not only the Tower but the view of the coast.

Esperance



A beach and nature-lover's dream, Esperance is blessed with squeaky-clean beaches, turquoise waters, untouched islands and colour-filled wildflower country. Among its most famous beauty spots is Australia's whitest beach, Lucky Bay - set against a stunning seascape of 110 islands of the Recherche Archipelago, even the kangaroos can't resist lounging here.

Things to do

If you're seeking waves, hit the surf at West Beach, Fourth Beach or Observatory Beach.

Back in town, try a four wheel drive beach safari, Indigenous cultural tours, coach tours, island cruises, diving and fishing charters, abseiling, sand boarding, canoeing, mini golf and steam train rides.

Check out the arts centre and galleries, making time to drop into the museum to view what's left of the NASA Skylab after it slammed back down to Earth near Balladonia.

Esperance Stonehenge; Yes this is a copy of the real stonehenge. With a price tag of AS\$25pp entry fee.

Esperance Museum; takes about an hour and a half to go round. Has all sorts of different interesting and varied exhibits. The Skylab exhibit is very good with some quite large items on display from when it crashed to Earth. Easy to walk to and on the main street.

Fraser Island



Fraser Island, off Australia's eastern Queensland coast, is the world's largest sand island, stretching over 120km.

World Heritage-listed Fraser Island has the absolute best that one island can offer - cool towering rainforests to walk through; over 100 freshwater lakes to swim including the iconic Lake McKenzie and Lake Wabby, huge sand blows to climb, and an amazing 120km beach highway, complete with the Maheno shipwreck and cliffs of stunning coloured sands.

Lying off the coast of Hervey Bay and just south of the last of the Great Barrier Reef's coral cays, Fraser is the world's largest sand island and stretches for 123km and spans 166,000 hectares.

Suggestions

Lake McKenzie; Not to be missed Lake McKenzie is stunningly beautiful. It's a bit of a bumpy ride to get there but well worth it

Seventy-Five Mile Beach; The beach is quite busy due to lots of traffic on the beach. Trucks, buses, tourists and aircrafts are strolling on the beach. Very interesting: landing aircrafts directly on the beach.

Eli Creek; The water of the creek is so clear and clean. You can either do the walk along the creek or walk/swim in the water. It's a nice place to relax and have so fun with family and friends!

Cruise Destinations

Fremantle



Fremantle is a port city in Western Australia that is 30 minutes southwest of Perth.

There is a shuttle to the city centre and from there you are directed to the free Blue Cat Bus which does a circular trip with a bus every 10 minutes. There is also a free Red Cat bus doing a different route.

It is a pedestrian-friendly city with unique winding streets offers you a glimpse of a colonial and Gold Rush past in

balance with a modern and vibrant present!

On the edge of the Indian Ocean it has great ocean and river beaches to enjoy and the Ocean sunsets are spectacular! The bustling, centrally located, Cappuccino Strip with al fresco dining and coffee round the clock makes Fremantle a social hub and its shops are open for shopping 7 days a week.

Suggestions

Fremantle Jail is well worth a visit. Most of the jail is by guided tour only, and there are four to choose from, including an evening 'spooky' tour. Each tour lasts between 75 minutes to 2.5 hours and prices vary - for a single tour an adult pays A\$20 and over-65s pay A\$17. Booking more than one tour at a time brings the price down. There's a gift shop on site, as well as a café which does the usual drinks, snacks and light lunches.

Fremantle is the gateway to Perth.

Geraldton



Geraldton is a coastal city in the Mid West region of Western Australia, located 424 kilometres north of Perth.

Geraldton is nestled on WA's (Western Australia's) Batavia Coast, with the rolling hills of surrounding farmland and the Moresby Ranges creating a picturesque backdrop. Just 420 kilometres north of Perth, it's a pleasant drive up the coast.

Blessed with beautiful beaches and warm, sunny weather, Geraldton is one of WA's water sports hotspots, particularly

for yachting, windsurfing, surfing, diving and fishing.

Suggestions

Geraldton Visitor Centre, is located at 246 Marine Terrace. The visitor centre is the best place to start from. The staff are very helpful and will point you in the correct direction to spend your time here and around.

HMAS Sydney II Memorial; HMAS Sydney II is dedicated to the 645 Australian sailors who lost their lives on a ship trying to prevent the Germans from doing damage during World War II. The ship sunk within view of the memorial. Local guides give free tours of the memorial explaining its history and significance.

Museum of Geraldton; A small but well laid out museum and is well worth visiting. Don't miss the short but hauntingly beautiful 3D film about the wrecks of the Kormoran and HMAS Sydney. The section on shipwrecks is also excellent .

Oakabella Homestead; Absolutely wonderful insight into the history of this amazing place it really gives you an idea of how difficult things were for the first settlers out in the Mid West, There is a nice little coffee/cafe/tea rooms with cold drinks (gets hot out there) and coffee, tea scones with jam and cream. Well worth the trip

Hamilton Island (Whitsunday Islands)



Hamilton Island is the largest inhabited island of the Whitsunday Islands in Queensland, Australia.

Hamilton Island is situated in the heart of the Whitsundays and is one of 74 tropical islands that lie between the Queensland Coast and The Great Barrier Reef. It is a place to experience everything; idyllic coral fringed beaches provide the backdrop for an ideal tropical experience.

Suggestions

Wild Life Hamilton Island; This is a very small wildlife park and a little expensive. You can see the big crocodile close up because of the glass enclosure. It will only take about half an hour to get around.

Hamilton Island Marina; Just walk around, and take it all in. Enjoy a drink or grab something to eat, sit and watch the world go by. The area has a great buzz to it.

Catseye Beach; The beach is great and many activities to enjoy. Kayaking, paddleboards, catamarans and snorkelling.

Hobart (Tasmania)



Hobart is Tasmania's capital city and the second oldest capital in Australia, after Sydney. Located at the entrance to the Derwent River, its well-preserved surrounding bushland reaches close to the city centre and beaches line the shores of the river and estuary beyond.

Hobart offers a contrasting blend of heritage, scenery and culture, with world class activities and attractions nearby. Nestled amongst the foothills of Mt Wellington, Hobart combines heritage charm with a modern lifestyle in a setting

of exceptional beauty.

The port of Hobart is less than 5 minutes to the city by shuttle bus

Suggestions

The Trench (Penitentiary Chapel Historic Site); This tour is a great way for everyone to get close and personal with the past history of this area. The Staff are very insightful and welcoming people.

Take a guided tour, or self-guided walking tour of Battery Point - within walking distance of Hobart's waterfront - with its many historic houses dating from the first European settlement of 'Hobart Town'.

Drive or take a tour to the summit of Mount Wellington for spectacular views of the city and harbour and the peaks of the World Heritage Area in the distance and if the weather's no good then try the nearby Mt Nelson Signal Station instead.

Mount Nelson Lookout; Fantastic views across Hobart and beyond. Take a coat, even on a clear day it can be cold and windy.

Sullivans Cove; A scenic waterfront with several excellent restaurants and bars in the area.

Kangaroo Island



Kangaroo Island is a pristine wilderness - a place that has offered protection to substantial populations of native Australian animals, a place of beauty and a place of escape. Kangaroo Island (or 'KI' as the locals call it) is also big and surprisingly diverse.

You will find soaring cliffs, dense bushland, towering sand dunes, wetlands and massive arcs of bone white beach a lot like the coast of west Cornwall, but with eucalypts rather than gorse growing.

A BIG Island - as the third largest island off the coast of mainland Australia, Kangaroo Island is more than a day-trip destination.

Ships drop anchor in the bay, and tender into the tiny township of Penneshaw. There's not much here apart from a small supermarket and a restaurant, and there's a quite steep walk to get to them so maybe not ideal for those with mobility issues (sometimes there is a local free shuttle bus laid on). But there is a penguin colony and a bathing beach, both less than 400m from the jetty and worth it if you can get to them.

The island itself is stunning, surprisingly large and very spread out (155km x 55km). And there is NO public transport and only a few taxis. However, private tours can be booked at the tender jetty on the day, or pre-booked online.

Suggestions

Flinders Chase National Park is home a colony of fur seals, and here you will also find the intriguing 'Remarkable Rocks' and 'Admirals Arch', both formed by sea erosion and weathering. The visitors centre is great, lovely staff and the cafe is really good.

Cape Willoughby Conservation Park, with its old lighthouse, visitor centre and coastal scenery is worth going to see. A bonus is the high chance of spotting kangaroos living in the area. Also for wildlife-lovers, there is the Seal Bay Conservation Park, where in addition to the protected colony of seals there is the Koala Walk through eucalyptus woodlands.

Raptor Domain, This is a wonderful place to get up close and personal with some of the birds they have rescued and have participating in the shows. You can have them hop on your lap during the show .

Hanson Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, Great place to check Koalas in their own habitat. Nice park with two large "avenues" full of eucalyptus trees.

Admirals Arch is a rock formation and is one of Kangaroo Island's most impressive and unusual natural landmarks. It is a great photo opportunity.

Although very expensive, compared to other loctions, this is another place you could thionk about hiring a car. About AUD\$170 AUD for the day. However, compared to an excursion of £300 very cheap.

Margaret River



Margaret River is a small town south of Perth in Western Australia, known for its craft breweries, boutiques and surrounding wineries.

Blessed with mild weather and abundant sunshine, Margaret River has evolved from a chilled-out surfer town into a popular base for enjoying the region's fine flavours and spectacular scenery, where rolling vineyards sit against a backdrop of ocean and forest.

It is both a region and a bustling market town famed for its wine, incredible surfing, gorgeous coastline, multi-chambered caves and mysterious karri (eucalyptus) forests.

Tender Required.

Suggestions

Margaret River Visitor Centre; Your first port of call for all information you need to visit the area. Maps, brochures for wine, beer, food tours. The staff are friendly and knowledgeable and will direct you to points of interest as well as some great wineries. It also has a gift and souvenir shop.

This is the place of Australian Wine. So, try and get onto a tour. Either cruise line or DIY.

The Grove Experience; The whole experience of the tour to the tasting is absolutely amazing. Everyone there is very accommodating and loved sharing their knowledge.

Lake Cave; The Lake cave is an amazing small cave with beautiful formations and reflections. Your guide will do a great job explaining the history and the processes involved in its formation and as it is a small cave the tour is not overly long so a good spot to start your explorations. There are a lot of stairs but they all have solid rails and you are not rushed on the way back up. There is also a good information display in the information centre to explore before or after your tour.

Mammoth Cave; is not cheap \$22.50. However, it is very cavernous and has soaring ceilings filled with stalactites. With good walkways and adequate lighting you will have a marvellous time learning about the geology and the megafauna of the region. The commentary on the self-guiding walk is excellent. . Be aware there are a lot of steps and if you go out the main exit there are 170 steps to climb.

Cruise Destinations

Melbourne



The City of Melbourne is a local government area in Victoria, Australia, located in the central city area of Melbourne.

The sail in to a Melbourne is 50 miles from the open sea

Suggestions

It's very easy to get around Melbourne. The ship's free shuttle bus drops you outside the NGV Australia Art Gallery, which is close to Federation Square. And the entire city centre is contained within a 'Free Tram Zone' - Myki cards (similar to London's Oyster cards) are only needed for journeys outside this zone and cost around A\$7 for a day pass.

The free City Circle trams are fun - they are old-style trams which run on a continuous circular route around the city, with recorded explanations of the sights at each stop along with the map and guide you are given with the travel card. . You can treat them like hop-on-hop-off buses. They run every 15 minutes, and the full circuit takes about an hour.

There is a lot going on in and around the Yarra River which flows almost through the centre of the city... There is the Eureka Tower, with the blue and gold panelling. On the 88th floor is the observation deck and it is the highest public vantage point in a building in the Southern Hemisphere at 285 m. The Skydeck has an area known as 'The Edge' - a glass cube which projects 3 m out from the building with visitors inside, suspended almost 300 m above the ground. When one enters, the glass is opaque as the cube moves out over the edge of the building. Once fully extended over the edge, the glass becomes clear. However, camera's are not really allowed in The Edge - they take photos and flog them to you.

The Immigration Museum is situated in the old Customs house on Flinders Street. Very informative displays of how Australia (Victoria in particular) came to be such a melting-pot of nations, races and religions. Keep an eye out for the diary kept by one man as he sailed from the UK in 1951. Help and information is also available here if you are researching possible Australian family.

There are a number of parks joined together, Queen Victoria Park, King's Domain and the Royal Botanic gardens. Fifteen minutes' walk from the Eureka Tower and you are at the heart of King's Domain

The shopping area in Melbourne is famous for its 19th century arcades and these house individual shops and cafés. It easy to wander around Melbourne the centre is like a grid and the tram system crisscross around the grid.

The Victoria Market is huge with over 1000 stalls some tat but some really interesting craft stalls.

St Kilda beach is within walking distance (say 30 mins). Acland Street in St Kilda is good for Lunch options.

Newcastle



Newcastle is a harbour city in the Australian state of New South Wales.

A harbour city with amazing surf beaches linked by the spectacular Bathers Way coastal walk, Newcastle is north of Sydney and a delight to explore. Enjoy world-famous Merewether Beach, cool bars, delicious food, fascinating history, and a lively arts and music scene.

Suggestions

Newcastle Memorial Walk; Whether you live in Newcastle or are in for the day, there is no better place to see everything the Newcastle basin has to offer than a walk on the Memorial Walk. Located above the coastline at the very East end of Newcastle this is the highest point in Newcastle CBD and offers fantastic views all round.

King Edward Park; Beautiful park with lots of different areas to explore and wide open areas to relax and chill. Easy to get to from the city.

The Lock-Up; The lock-up is an intriguing contemporary art space in Newcastle. Housed in the old Police Station on Hunter Street this gallery features several unique art spaces in the old cells of the Station.

Blackbutt Reserve; Kangaroos, wallabies, emus, koala bears, and more! Plenty of fauna and flora, too! Give yourself an hour or two to fully enjoy your visit. Nice souvenir shop with affordable water to stay hydrated. It's free for all to attend, and a small fee for animal shows.

Perth



Perth, capital of Western Australia, sits where the Swan River meets the southwest coast. Its suburbs lie along sandy beaches, and the huge, riverside Kings Park and Botanic Garden on Mt. Eliza offer sweeping views of the city. T

Suggestions

Jump on a ferry to South Perth to take in that sensational skyline.

You can hop on the free bus to museums, art galleries and the Perth Mint - home to the world's greatest collection of gold bars.

The Perth Mint; Established as a branch of Britain's Royal Mint it's primary functions to refine gold from Western Australia's eastern goldfields and strike gold coinage continue to this day. Attractions include the largest coin in the world recognised by Guinness World Records, Australia's largest collection of natural gold nuggets, historic coin exhibits, an elegantly appointed retail shop, a courtyard café, and much more. The Perth Mint provides wheelchair access and disabled toilet

Aquarium of Western Australia; located in Hillary's Boat Harbour, just north of Perth. There are over 40 stunning exhibits: surround yourself with sharks, stingrays, turtles and hundreds of stunning fish in Australia's largest walk through aquarium; explore ancient reefs and sandy bays; see colourful coral lagoons and face a deadly line-up of sea creatures in the DANGERzone.

Cruise Destinations

Both Kings Park and the Botanic Garden are the perfect introduction to Western Australia's natural diversity.

Western Australian Museum; beware if planning to go here it is closed until 2020.

Port Douglas



Port Douglas is a town on the Coral Sea in Australia's North Queensland, north of Cairns. It's known for its beach resorts, and as a jumping-off point for tours to the Great Barrier Reef, which depart from the long-standing Reef Marina. The planet's largest reef system, the Great Barrier Reef teems with colourful marine species and is a renowned snorkelling and scuba-diving destination.

The town's main attraction is Four Mile Beach, a pristine strip of palm-fringed, white sand which begins at the eastern end of Macrossan St, the main drag for shopping, wining and dining. On the western end of Macrossan you'll find the picturesque Dickson Inlet and Reef Marina, where the rich and famous park their aquatic toys.

Suggestions

The Port Douglas Tourist Information Centre; You will find them at the centre of it all on Port's main road, Macrossan Street, surrounded by a wonderful ambience of fantastic restaurants, holiday accommodation and unique shopping. Web page: <http://www.infoportdouglas.com.au/about-us/>

Trinity Bay Lookout; Head to Trinity Bay Lookout for spectacular views of the Coral Sea and nearby coral cays.

St Mary's by the Sea; Worth a peek inside, this quaint, nondenominational, white timber church was built in 1911.

Four Mile Beach; Fringed by lazy palms, this broad stretch of squeaky sand reaches as far as you can squint. There's a netted swimming enclosure in front of the surf life-saving club.

Sydney



Sydney, capital of New South Wales and one of Australia's largest cities.

This is normally a two day visit. Get up bright and early to experience the sail into Sydney Harbour. The customary berthing place is close to the Opera House and the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

If you are looking for a café then avoid the 'Dare' café. Over half an hour to get a coffee and it was not worth the

wait.

Suggestions

Sydney Opera House; to not visit this iconic building when visiting Sydney, would be like eating a grilled cheese without the cheese.

Sydney Harbour Bridge; Dominates Sydney's harbor and the area of town with roads that feed it. Easy to walk over, and provides amazing views. The one thing I would say is that they do not let you take cameras up there (in case you drop them) but they are more than happy to take photos of you for a price.

The Rocks; This area is adjacent to the harbour area; there are many shops and restaurants; also a terrific museum of modern art that is free. Many places to just sit and relax and enjoy all the people.

Cruise Destinations

For history lovers, The Rocks Discovery Museum is a must. It's next door to the visitor information centre on the Rocks, so only a short walk from the ship's dock. It's only a small museum but it's packed with information and artefacts going back to the time of the first European settlers. There are also seven short videos running on a continuous loop (total time of about 35 minutes) on subjects such as Building the Bridge, the Battle for the Rocks (against modern development of the area in the 1970s), and the Wooden Roads of the Rocks. Entry to the museum is free, and allow about an hour to look around (plus time for the videos, if you want to watch those).

Botanical Gardens. They have a little train you can spend half-hour riding around in.

Queen Victoria Building; Fantastic vintage setting for numerous shops, food or coffee, and a major train station all in one.

A day pass for the ferry, bus, tram and train is A\$23pp for the day.

Manley Beach is very touristy but very clean. Well known shops like Billabong and other surfing names. It was about a 5 minute walk from the ferry to the beach and even early morning i90s quite busy.

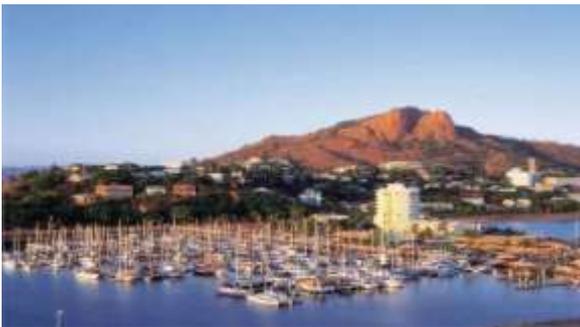
Lots of people say to give Bondi a miss. In their opinion it's a dump.

Head for Shelley bay which is part of the Cabbage Point Nature Reserve. This is a 20 minute walk along the boardwalk with fantastic views along the coast.

Get the ferry from Circular Quay and just go to Manley and back as many times as you can. Also take the ferry towards Darling Harbour and get off at Lavender Bay. I think the stop is Milson Point. The view from there is so different as you get the bridge and opera house in the same photo.

Then catch the ferry to Darling Harbour. Lots of restaurants here as well as the Aquarium and the a National Maritime museum. From here you can catch the light railway to Sydney Fish Market. This is another amazing place. The different species of fish and the size of them just had to be seen to be believed. It will be buzzing with many different nationalities. All around the outside of the market are cafés and restaurants cooking the fresh fish.

Townsville



Townsville is a coastal city in north-eastern Queensland, Australia.

Sprawling between a brooding red hill and a sparkling blue sea, Townsville is a tidy and relatively modern-feeling spot with a lot to offer: excellent museums, a huge aquarium, world-class diving, two major sporting teams, vibrant nightlife and an endless esplanade. It's a pedestrian-friendly city, and its grand, refurbished 19th-century buildings offer loads of landmarks - if you do get lost, the friendly locals will

be only too happy to lend a hand...or shout you a beer.

Suggestions

Castle Hill; Great for 360 degree views of Townsville and magnetic island. Good location to view Townsville city and surrounding areas. There are a few short easy beautiful walks on the top. You won't get disappointed with the experience.

Cruise Destinations

Riverway; wo great huge swimming pools with the lower pool overlooking the Ross River. Lower infinity pool has smaller pool alongside for bubs. Wheelchair access into lower pool and great space for everyone to have awesome swim. Change rooms and showers very clean. Parks and walkways around very pretty along the river. Life guards on duty.

Reef HQ Great Barrier Reef Aquarium; It is an amazing and educating place for a young and old alike. The staff are extremely friendly and helpful with any questions and are full of knowledge.

Whitsunday Islands



Situated south of Townsville and off the coast of tropical North Queensland, Whitsunday Islands cruises offer the perfect place for pure relaxation.

Fabulous beaches, tropical forests, amazing swimming and snorkelling the Great Barrier Reef - the Whitsunday Islands are the perfect cruise holiday islands. Catamarans, sailing boats and large yachts weave their way between the islands - many offering snorkelling, diving and whale-watching trips. Ferries provide a lifeline and are a great way to island hop

while soaking up the sun.

Yorkeys Knob



Yorkeys Knob is one of the beach suburbs of Cairns, North Queensland. It is approximately 13 kilometres north of the centre of Cairns, and is the third beach suburb after Machans Beach and Holloways Beach.

Suggestions

The Tourist Information Centre is open 7 days for visitors to Yorkeys Knob and the Northern Beaches of Cairns. The Tourist Information Centre offers onsite tourist information on Yorkeys Knob Tours and all Cairns Tours, and is a free tour booking service.

For ideas on what is available try here. <http://www.villamarine.com.au/blog/cairns-discount-tours>

Great Barrier Reef Day Tours & Diving Trips are on this locations door step.

Beaches

Yorkeys Knob Beach is long, around 2 kms from the headland on the northern end to the river at the southern end. Lovely views south across trinity inlet and the mountains behind Yarrabah. The swimming enclosure at the northern end of the beach is watched and patrolled by the surf life savers from 9am to around 5.30pm everyday. Fantastic playground area if you have little kids and there are also barbecues and tables in the park for public use. Outdoor showers and toilet facilities are also onsite.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Alotau



Alotau is the capital of Milne Bay Province, in the south-east of Papua New Guinea. It is located on the northern shore of Milne Bay and gives a traveller a "South Pacific" feel to PNG.

A long sail-in past mountains covered in foliage.

It is a pretty quiet town, very laid back. The main street reminds you of a "frontier" town with general stores & groceries on either side. Most items and essentials are available. It is best to use a credit card for cash advance as

some foreign bank cards may not work. Only US, Australian, and New Zealand currencies are exchanged at the main bank.

My research did not find much to do and see here.

Beaches

Alotau has black sand beaches due to the volcanic nature of the place so in terms of pristine white sandy beaches you have to go to the outer islands.

Kiriwina



Part of the Trobriand Islands. The Trobriand Islands are a 450-square-kilometre archipelago of coral atolls off the east coast of New Guinea.

The two major ports in this remote and mysterious island group in the northern part of Papua New Guinea's Milne Bay Province are Kiriwina and Kitava. Kiriwina is the larger of the two, with Kitava traditionally taking up the overflow from its larger neighbour.

Suggestions

Keep an eye out for locally made handicrafts and shell jewellery, particularly the ornate and intricate ebony carvings and shell necklaces. However, with the influx of cruise tourists, prices have begun to creep up, but this merchandise is the real deal, so don't embarrass yourself by haggling too hard. You might get 10 or 20 per cent off, but that's it. Any further haggling is rude and devalues their beautiful craft.

Obweria village specialises in intricately carved ebony walking sticks, many decorated with pearl-shell inlays. Ebony is an extremely hard and brittle timber, and difficult to work, so carving it requires exceptional skill and months of work from the artisan. Kabwaku village, 20 minutes walk from Omarakana village is also known for walking sticks carvers.

At Kaibola village, at the northern tip of Kiriwina, you can swim and snorkel at the picture-postcard beach, though much coral has died recently. About 1½ hours' walk from Kaibola is Kalopa Cave, near Matawa village. There are several deep limestone caves housing burial antiquities and skeletal remains. There is a drop off further along the beach and young men will take you for a canoe ride to get there.

Cruise Destinations

Halfway between Losuia and Kaibola, about 15km is Omarkana is where the island's paramount chief resides. You'll know you're there by the large, intricate, painted yam house outside his Western-style house. If paying your respects, keep your head lower than his; a gift of K20 is now preferable to betel nut.

A 15-minute walk from Butia Lodge, there's a sacred cave of crystal-clear water that's popular with locals. You can swim in the cool water provided you get permission from the owner.

Rabaul



The inside of a large caldera is an unusual place to house a town, but this is exactly where you will find Rabaul.

Rabaul is a township in East New Britain province, on the island of New Britain, in the country of Papua New Guinea. New Britain is an island about 60 kilometres to the east of the island of New Guinea.

Suggestions

Mount Tavoruvur; An awesome, amazing and stunning volcano... But its destruction is evident and be respectful to the surrounding area as you travel. It's a 'must see' when visiting Rabaul or Kokopo.

New Guinea Club & Rabaul Museum; This museum provides a glimpse of past life in Rabaul. The exhibits are a little tired and dusty but they are authentic and the building is interesting.

PHILIPPINES

Manila



Manila, the capital of the Philippines, is a densely populated bayside city on the island of Luzon, which mixes Spanish colonial architecture with modern skyscrapers.

Located on Manila Bay in the South China Sea, and bisected by the Pasig River, the capital of the Philippines is historic and modern, rich and poor.

Manila's moniker, the 'Pearl of the Orient', could not be more apt - its cantankerous shell reveals its jewel only to those resolute enough to pry. No stranger to hardship, the city has endured every disaster both human and nature could throw at it, and yet today the chaotic metropolis thrives as a true Asian megacity. Skyscrapers pierce the hazy sky, mushrooming from the grinding poverty of expansive shantytowns, while gleaming malls foreshadow Manila's brave new air-conditioned world. The congested roads snarl with traffic, but, like the overworked arteries of a sweating giant, they are what keep this modern metropolis alive.

Suggestions

Fort Santiago; Fort Santiago is a great place to visit it shows you some of the history of the Philippines which has had a very colourful history.

Manila Cathedral; This cathedral is the oldest one in Manila is a must see unbelievable handcrafted art.

Paco Park; Beautiful little park. The jewel is the ancient church. Still used every Sunday. Very photogenic and beautiful.

Cruise Destinations

San Agustin Church; Beautiful buildings - both the church and the monastery. They have both been well preserved and you get a good sense of both of them. The artefacts on display are very impressive too. The best way to see the inside of the Cathedral is to pay for the museum tour as it also allows access to the Chapel.

National Museum; If you loves history then this is perfect place to visit You'll see things that will bring you back to the past, The whole place brings so much nostalgia.

RUSSIA

Petropavlovsk



Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky is the capital and only city at the peninsula. Built like a base for Russian Navy the city has poor infrastructure. It is very easy to move round the city. There is the main street leading through Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky along the bay all the big shops and sights can be found there.

Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky is a city among volcanoes. About 25 km from the city there is a chain of five volcanoes with two active ones such as Avachinsky and Koryaksky. Always smoking Mutnovsky volcano is clearly seen over Avacha Bay and behind it, rarely but also smoking, Gorely, and significantly closer them all is Vilyuchinsky.

Tourism is becoming an increasingly important part of the local economy. Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky travel agencies offer trips to hot springs and volcanoes, helicopter tours to the famous Valley of Geysers and Uzon Volcano, horse rides as well as sea voyages, rafting, and fishing.

There are a number of museums and monuments in and around the city. With the majority of the museums stating that entrance should be booked beforehand.

JAPAN

Immigration control means a face to face with an immigration official and your index finger prints taken.

Aomori



Aomori is the capital city of Aomori Prefecture, in the northern Tōhoku region of northern Japan.

This port town used to be the main departure point to Hokkaido via ferry; and, although it remains the main port for car ferries, the opening of the Seikan Undersea Railway Tunnel and the advent of cheap flights have reduced ridership and many travellers now bypass the city altogether. Today Aomori is best known for its spectacular Nebuta Matsuri, Japanese summer festival, held in August.

Suggestions

Nebuta Warasse; If you cannot be here for the actual festival, then the Nebuta Warasse is an interesting museum dedicated to the city's famous Nebuta Matsuri. The museum is housed in a unique building covered in red metal slats and stands along Aomori's waterfront district just north of Aomori Station.

Cruise Destinations

Sannai Maruyama Site; The Sannai Maruyama Archaeological Site is the largest and one of the most complete and best preserved Jomon Period (13000-300 BC) villages in Japan. Unearthed by accident the former Sannai Maruyama Village once included over 700 structures and dwellings including long houses, storage structures, roads, and trash and burial pits.

Hakkoda Ropeway; It is worth travelling there to take the rope way to the TOP of the mountain. The view on a clear day is awesome.

Hakodate



Hakodate is one of the main cities on Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost island. Looming over the town is 334m-high Mount Hakodate.

Built on a narrow strip of land between Hakodate Harbour to the west and the Tsugaru Strait to the east, Hakodate is the southern gateway to the island of Hokkaidō. Under the Kanagawa Treaty of 1854, the city was one of the first ports to open up to international trade, and as such hosted a small foreign community. That influence can still be seen in the

Motomachi district, a steep hillside that's sprinkled with European buildings and churches; the waterfront lined with red-brick warehouses; and in the nostalgic streetcar that still makes the rounds of the city.

Suggestions

Mount Hakodate; The view was amazing. But do expect swarms of tourist taking pictures. Dress warmly, the winds are very strong.

Goryokaku Tower; A visit to the top of the tower is well worth the money. There is an interesting history section about the arrival of Perry and the civil war was explained through small figurines. Stop for an ice cream on the ground floor.

Hakodate Park; At the foot of Mt Hakodate is this cosy park which has lots of cherry blossom trees. In early May they bloom in wonderful beauty in contrast to the coniferous green trees growing up the mountain.

Old British Consulate; The British left this building in 1934. It has now been restored and turned into a quaint tea house with nice choice of teas and cakes. Take the sight-seeing bus from the bus terminal (in front of JR station) to Former British Consulate of Hakodate. It is a short ride, only 10 minutes. The admission is 300 yen per adult and 150 yen per child.

Kagoshima



Kagoshima, a seaside city on Japan's Kyushu Island, is the capital of Kagoshima Prefecture. It's best known for Sakurajima, an active volcano that faces Kinko Bay.

Suggestions

Kagoshima Sightseeing Bus; It is very convenient for all attractions with the one day ticket. It is highly recommended.

Sengan-en Garden; The great garden of the city lord, with a nice view of Sakurajima. The garden is quite big with a 400 meters mountain trail, which has a great and clear view of the famous volcano mountain. The garden is about a 40 mins bus drive from the central Kagoshima city, and is easily accessible through the 'city view bus', which ran through major attractions within Kagoshima.

Yunohira Lookout; Yunohira Lookout is the closest you can get to Sakurajima itself. If you take the sightseeing bus, you will stop at the lookout for about 15 mins which is just enough time for taking photos etc.

Ferris Wheel; 500 Yen for a 15 min ride, right in the centre of town. Probably the best 360 view available for miles. No ticket booth, just a coin machine dispensing tickets which you hand to the attendant outside.

Kochi



Kōchi is located on the island of Shikoku in Japan. The city is small and friendly, with a casual atmosphere and a dose of southern flair.

With easy access to sea and mountains, there are sweeping beaches, hidden temples and a hilltop castle to explore besides the trendy malls and bustling palm-lined arcades of Kochi downtown. For spectacular views across the city, it's worth the climb to the castle; a gleaming example of 17th century history with its perfectly intact interior

documenting a dramatic feudal past. The nearby Hirome food market sells everything from fresh fish to tasty katsuo and ramen noodles, but for a calmer pilgrimage, visit Chikurin-ji Temple. Overlooking the harbour at the top of Godaisan mountain, the temple's Treasure House hosts Buddhist sculpture from the Heian and Kamakura periods; while opposite is the lovingly tended garden dedicated to the life and career of botanist Dr Tomitarou Makino.

Suggestions

Kochi boasts several attractions of interest to travellers. A well preserved, original hilltop castle from the feudal period marks Kochi's downtown. Nearby on another mountain, Godaisan, pilgrims visit Chikurenji Temple, one of the 88 temples along the Shikoku Pilgrimage. The city is also the proud home of Sakamoto Ryoma, who played a role in realizing the Meiji Restoration. The Sakamoto Ryoma Memorial Museum is located at the beautiful Katsurahama Beach, just south of the city centre.

Cruise Destinations

Mount Godaisan; this is a small mountain to the east of Kochi's downtown. It was named after a Chinese mountain by Buddhist priests visiting from China. Chikurinji's temple grounds feature an interesting array of halls and structures, including a beautiful five-storied pagoda. A treasure hall displays several Buddhist statues and scrolls of importance to the temple, and paid entrance to the hondo (main hall) offers a view of the building's interior and a nicely kept garden.

Muroran



The Muroran Port is located on the eastern tip of Hokkaido's Uchiura Bay. From old times it has been known as a fine natural harbor, and with the opening of the port in 1872, it has played an important role in Hokkaido's overall development as a strategic point for sea and ground traffic and as an industrial base to support central Hokkaido.

Muroran spreads over an islet at the point and stretches along the curve in Volcano Bay. It is in a magnificent setting, with the mountains towering in the distance and a volcano at

the opposite end of the bay.

It is known as a very industrial city.

Suggestions

Cape Chikyu; the city has been known to provide a hop-on-hop-off bus for a cruise ship visit. This will be one of the stops - worth hopping off here, walking up the stairs for a lovely view of surrounding cliffs, ocean and lighthouse.

Hell Valley; Part of Shikotsu-Toya National Park, Noboribetsu Onsen is a resort town with baths fed by around 3,000 liters (793 gallons) of water from the hot spring known as Jigokudani, or Hell Valley. It earns its nickname from the impressive plumes of sulfur-scented gas that escape from the area's volcanic rocks.

Nagasaki



Nagasaki is the capital and the largest city of Nagasaki Prefecture on the island of Kyushu in Japan. Standing over the Nakashima River is Japan's first Chinese-style stone bridge, the Spectacle Bridge, which reflects as ovals on the surface of the water. It is said that bridges here were only built on roads that led to temples, ornate structures that still adorn many of the streets.

Etched in the memory of Nagasaki is the 1945 atomic bomb that destroyed much of the city. Today it still lingers in poignant reminders, such as Peace Park and the A-Bomb Museum,

Suggestions

Nagasaki Peace Park; The Nagasaki Peace Park commemorates the atomic bombing of Nagasaki of 9 August 1945, which destroyed wide parts of the city and killed ten thousands of inhabitants. The park is home to the massive Peace Statue as well as various other memorials. A monument around a black pillar marks the atomic explosion's epicentre in the nearby Hypocenter Park and stores the name list of bomb victims.

Cruise Destinations

Mount Inasayama; for something different get a day pass for the light railway from the info office, cost of 500 yen each, approx £3.50. You should get a map showing clearly the numbered stops and what coloured tram to take. Take the green tram 2 stops then change to the Blue tram to reach your first attraction which is the cable car or ropeway as it is known in Japan. This is about a 15 minute walk from the tram stop. The cable car will cost about 2460 yen for two, about £17.50. It is very clean with frequent cars taking 16 passengers to the top of Mount Inasa. There you will have breathtaking 360 degree views of Nagasaki and completely clear skies meant that we could see for miles. You should be able to see your ship looking like a toy boat from the top of the mountain. Do not worry about getting lost, the signage is very good.

Mount Inasa (Inasayama) is a 333 meter high mountain in close distance to Nagasaki's city centre. The night views from Mount Inasa are ranked among Japan's three best night views besides the views from Mount Hakodate and Mount Rokko.

Glover Garden; is an open air museum, exhibiting mansions of former Western residents of Nagasaki. It is located on the hill where Western merchants settled down after the end of Japan's era of seclusion in the second half of the 19th century. A nice panorama of the city can be enjoyed from the garden.

Osaka



Osaka, a large port city and commercial centre on the Japanese island of Honshu, is known for its modern architecture, boisterous nightlife and hearty street food.

Japan's third largest city, Osaka offers you a combination of historical and cultural attractions with modern developments. Before World War II, Osaka was an exotic maze of crisscrossing waterways and traditional wooden buildings, but unfortunately most of these were destroyed in the bombings.

Today however, the city has leapt into the architectural future with such buildings as the Imperial Hotel, the inverted U-shape of the Umeda Sky Building and the enormous Ferris wheel on top of the HEP Five complex.

In addition, you will see the gentle side of Japan. Kyoto, the former capital, is a serene city of geometric gardens, geisha houses, cherry trees, temples and palaces. While on Osaka cruises witness the ritual of the tea ceremony or savour a teriyaki lunch in the loveliest of Japanese cities.

Suggestions

Osaka Castle; The construction of Osaka Castle started in 1583. Major repair works gave the castle new glamour in 1997. The castle tower is now entirely modern on the inside and even features an elevator for easier accessibility. It houses an informative museum about the castle's history and Toyotomi Hideyoshi.

Shitennoji Temple; Shitennoji is one of Japan's oldest temples and the first ever to be built by the state. The outer temple grounds are free to enter, but there is an admission fee to gain access to the inner precinct, the Gokuraku-jodo Garden and the treasure house. In the pebble covered courtyard of the inner precinct stand a five-storied pagoda that can be entered and ascended and the Main Hall (Kondo) in which Prince Shotoku is enshrined as a statue of Kannon.

Osaka River Cruise; A cruise ship tour where you can enjoy the sights of Osaka from the sea, including Osaka Castle, the landmark of Osaka. From 8 pm, a night boat service, known as the "Twilight Boat", runs, giving you the chance to enjoy the romantic, illuminated Osaka night scenery. The boats offer drinks and light meals, and are equipped with toilets.

More ideas can be found here: <https://www.tsunagu-japan.com/50-things-to-do-in-osaka/>

Cruise Destinations

Kochi Castle; Kochi Castle is one of just twelve Japanese castles to have survived the fires, wars and other catastrophes of the post feudal age. The castle used to be the seat of the Yamauchi lords, who ruled over the surrounding region.

Excursions

Highlights of Kyoto; after a drive out you first visit the Golden Pavilion or Rokuon-ji temple, with its 24 carat Gold Leaf glistening in the sunlight. Your next stop is the Nino-jo Castle which dates back to 1603 and is a World Heritage site. Finally you visit an ornate Shinto Shrine. On the way back you have a short shop stop for those must have Japanese items. Lunch is included in this excursion at a luxury hotel. Western food with a Japanese twist.

Otaru



Otaru, a port city on Hokkaido (Japan's northernmost island), lies northwest of Sapporo on Ishikari Bay. The city's elite invested in the construction of grand, Western-style buildings of stone and brick - the style of the time - many of which line the town's central canal. This exotic (for Japan) atmosphere makes Otaru very popular with domestic visitors.

Suggestions

Otaru Canal; The most famous place in the centre of town in Otaru to take a walk. Every season has a different look.

Mt. Tengu; The view on the top of Mount Tengu was mesmerizing. You can catch the bus up to Tenguyama and then ride the ropeway up to the top of the mountain (purchase bus and ropeway tickets plus complimentary drink in the restaurant at the Chuo bus station in front of the JR train station)

Otaru Museum; There are wonderful displays of the uniforms the railway workers wore throughout the ages. Fabulous interactive scenes of how and when the railway was constructed. Also great visualization of the different trains and their uses.

Sakaiminato



The city of Sakaiminato is located in the western section of Tottori Prefecture. Sakaiminato is known from old as an outstanding fishery city on the Sea of Japan side, and it thrived as a base for trade with the Asian Continent.

Sakaiminato Tourist Information Center provides a lot of services to visitors such as free brochures and maps in various languages.

Suggestions

The Mizuki Shigeru Road; If you know about this anime, it will be all the more interesting, but even if you don't you can have some fun. Look out for the mascots walking around dressed like characters who you could take your picture with.

Yumeminato Tower; It is only 10 minutes from the Yonago Airport. On the top floor (4/F) you can view the whole area.

Shimizu



From the Shimizu Port, you can view nearby Mt. Fuji, a world cultural heritage. It is also near Miho no Matsubara, a Mt. Fuji heritage asset, and the port is one of Japan's three most beautiful ports. It is temperate year-round for comfortable sightseeing.

Shimizu Port has a number of attractions but is most famous for being among Japan's most scenic ports thanks to views of Mount Fuji on clear days.

What makes this port so famous is Mt. Fuji + beautiful harbour + the ocean + on a clear day = a magnificent picture. But, sometimes it is cloudy.

The harbor has full modern amenities, including a tourist information center, currency exchange, post office, and a fully-equipped passenger terminal with waiting lounges, three shops, a conference room, and a visitor's deck. Cruise passengers will enjoy the welcome ceremony and cultural presentations on the harbor, such as tea ceremony, geisha performances, and tuna carving.

Suggestions

Shopping; many souvenir shops are found near the Shimizu Port and there are several shopping centers in the city. Within a short distance from the port is the S-Pulse Dream Plaza, a modern complex; it contains various attractions and amenities,

Traditional Japanese wooden handicrafts include lacquer ware; Sashimono, a type of woodwork made without nails or adhesives; and bamboo ware; these are practical yet aesthetically pleasing souvenirs.

Tokachi Millenium Forest; Various styles of gardens are laid out in the 400 ha site. As well as selling gardening tools, there are facilities where you can enjoy dishes made with local ingredients.

Nihon-Daira is a beautiful forest covered hill that also boasts of spectacular views of Mt. Fuji. From atop the hill, a cable car will take visitors to Kunozan Toshogu Shrine.

If you really want to visit Mount Fiji then for peace of mind it is suggested you take a ships tour.

Tokyo



Tokyo, Japan's busy capital mixes the ultramodern and the traditional, from neon-lit skyscrapers to historic temples.

Tokyo may be forever reaching into the future but you can still see traces of the shogun's capital on the kabuki stage, at a sumo tournament or under the cherry blossoms. It's a modern city built on old patterns, and in the shadows of skyscrapers you can find anachronistic wooden shanty bars and quiet alleys, raucous traditional festivals and lantern-lit yakitori (grilled chicken) stands. In older neighbourhoods you

can shop for handicrafts made just as they have been for centuries, or wander down cobblestone lanes where geisha once tread.

A day here will not do it justice. So, plan what you want to see in the time allowed.

Suggestions

Imperial Palace; The main park of the verdant palace grounds is the Imperial Palace East Garden, which is open to the public without reservations. You must take a token upon arrival and return it at the end of your visit.

Cruise Destinations

If you want to visit the actual Palace then you need to plan. Tours, lasting around one hour, 15 minutes), you must book ahead through the Imperial Household Agency's website or by phoning. Reservations are taken between a month and four days in advance - you'd be wise to apply as early as possible. Tours run twice daily from Monday to Friday (10am and 1.30pm), but not on public holidays nor afternoons from late July through to the end of August. <http://sankan.kunaicho.go.jp/english/index.html>

Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden; Beautiful gardens and the greenhouse is well worth a visit. Lots of different areas to offer something for many different nature lovers, Japanese water area, French & English garden sections etc.

Samurai Museum; Definitely worth paying a visit, great museum, with live demonstration of Samurai art with swords. Guided visit is included in ticket price!

Yokohama



Yokohama is Japan's second largest city with a population of over three million. Yokohama is located less than half an hour south of Tokyo by train,

Even though it's just 20 minutes' train ride south of central Tokyo, Yokohama has an appealing flavour and history all its own. Locals are likely to cite the uncrowded, walkable streets or neighbourhood atmosphere as the main draw, but for visitors it's the breezy bay front, creative arts scene, multiple microbreweries, jazz clubs and great international

dining.

Suggestions

Hara Model Railway Museum; The result of Hara Nobutaro's lifelong obsession with trains, this superb collection of model trains and other railway-associated memorabilia is every kid's and trainspotter's dream come true.

Landmark Tower; Standing an impressive 296m high (70 storeys) the Landmark Tower has one of the world's fastest lifts (45km/h). On clear days from the 69th floor Sky Garden observatory there are views to Tokyo and Mt Fuji.

Sankei-en; Opened to the public in 1906, this beautifully landscaped garden features walking paths among ponds, 17th-century buildings, several fine tea-ceremony houses and a 500-year-old, three-storey pagoda.

Yamashita Park; a short walk off the cruise ship towards the tower and you will stumbled across this park. Well laid out gardens alongside port area.

Further afield you have Tokyo

SOUTH KOREA

South Korean Currency is the Won , in 2017, 10,000 Won = approx £7.

Busan



Busan, a large port city in South Korea, is known for its beaches, mountains and temples. Head to the world's largest department store, Centum City, or spend the day relaxing on Haeundae Beach – Korea's largest. If a more cultural experience beckons, admire the pagodas, gates, temple halls, and shrines of Beomeosa Temple.

As you get off there will be Tourism agents to meet you and they will make you feel welcome. There will also be stalls set out selling local goods.

The shuttle bus takes around 1/2 hour to get to the drop off point. It is a typical city with high rise buildings and masses of traffic. You will be dropped by the Gukje Market where well over a thousand shops and stalls are waiting to take your Won.

Suggestions

Beomeosa Temple; While most would stick to just a tour within the compounds of the temple, try the walk to the stream & boulder ridden forest. It is quite pleasant and enjoyable. It is a fully functional temple, so one can see monks chanting, going about their daily lives etc.

Haedong Yonggung Temple; If visiting then a guide is recommended. There are many stories that need to be told of this place. It is amazing. Built right at the sea, the temple has many areas to be visited. Not suitable for wheel chairs or people with walking difficulties (too many steps).

Haeundae Beach; The most famous beach in Busan. The beach and surrounding area are really neat. So many cute stores and cafes.

Incheon



Incheon, a South Korean city bordering the capital of Seoul. It is South Korea's third largest city, this expanding metropolis and industrial port - 36km west of Seoul

Fragments of its history can be seen in Incheon today, particularly in the colourful Chinatown and Open Port areas, the most interesting areas to explore and easily accessible via subway.

Suggestions

Wolmi Park; this attractive park includes a replica of a traditional palace garden, walking trails shaded by leafy trees, a museum on the history of Korean emigration, and the hilltop Wolmi Observatory , offering views across the port and towards Yeongjong-do.

Incheon Landing Operation Memorial Hall; Find out about this daring attack at this sombre, strikingly designed museum. The displays include newsreel films of the Korean War, plus guided missiles and LVT landing crafts. Bus 6-1, 8 and 16 come here from Dongincheon subway.

Cruise Destinations

Jeondeungsa Temple; Amazing temple surrounded by gardens and other buildings. Traditional Korean site. Not crowded. Lovely coffee house on the grounds where we stopped afterward.

Incheon is the port for Seoul

Seoul



Seoul, the capital of South Korea, is a huge metropolis where modern skyscrapers, high-tech subways and pop culture meet Buddhist temples, palaces and street markets.

Seoul has a long history stretching far back into Korea's dynastic past. There is evidence for settlement in this area as far as 18 BC but Seoul as the capital city of Korea has a history back to the 14th century.

With so much in and around this city you need to do your research and plan your time here.

Suggestions

Gyeongbokgung Palace; This palace is located in the city and its just enormous. On the back it goes all the way back in to the mountains with a nice lake and park. The buildings are superb, its the highlight of Seoul.

Seoul Tower; You should visit N Tower if you want to look at the view of Seoul. It's the landmark of Seoul. The entrance fee is 9000 KRW, the observatory is opened from 10:00 to 23:00 pm. You can take on the namsan circle buses # 2 or 3 or 5 or namsan cable car.

CHINA

Hong Kong



Hong Kong is on China's south coast and is crammed with high rise buildings. It has the longest escalator in the world and the markets especially the fish one are worth a browse around. Shopping wise it has huge shopping malls and you can become overwhelmed with what is on offer.

Traffic in HK is horrendous so if wanting to see a lot of places, then it's really worth booking a ship's excursion. That way if the coach is caught in traffic, you don't miss the ship! Not such a problem if you have an overnight in port.

This is a good DIY with a little planning. However, to see everything that is on offer in this destination you really need a week.

The Ocean Terminal is one huge shopping, dining and entertainment venue. Upmarket shops that although duty free are still eyewateringly expensive.

Suggestions

So, to start, walk fifty meters from the ship to the Star Ferry terminal. Here you will find a Hong Kong Tourist Information Office. Collect all the free leaflets on show and take your pick. But the best is right in front of you a 25p ferry across the harbour to Hong Kong Island.

Cruise Destinations

This must be followed by a visit to The Peak, this is a must do, it is a vehicular railway and from the top you look down over the skyscrapers, amazing. The easiest way to get to the tram is take the bus, the bus station is across the road from the ferry terminal, but if you are up to it it is less than kilometre away. The tram rises almost vertically to 552mts, with panorama views of the city and country. Tickets are HK\$40pp (adult) Return and HK\$18pp (Child) (2016). It operates from 7am daily, every 15mins.

Try the white-knuckle bus ride to Stanley Market for some excellent bargains. It's a cheap, the bus ride that is.

If staying overnight, most cruises do, then the nightly, light show, Symphony of Lights' around the harbour is a must. It involves 44 buildings and starts about 7.45pm for 15 minutes, the best light show in the world. Beautiful.

Escape the noise with a trip to The Man Mo Temple, Hong Kong's oldest. It is located on Hollywood Road, Hong Kong Island. Free. Open 8am to 6pm.

Lantau Island: You can do it yourself but queues for the Ngong Ping cable car are horrendous, and if you are part of a tour group then you're fast tracked past the queue. A choice of 2 types of cable car cabins are offered - regular and crystal.... crystal cabin has a clear glass floor so not for the faint hearted. Views from the cable car are stunning on a clear day.

Plenty to see on Lantau Island, Tai O fishing village where you are taken out in speedboats to spot pink dolphins, also shown temples and given shopping time there. The main attraction is the Po Lin monastery and the Tian Tan/Big Buddha, again it's a complex with temples and Buddhas and other deities galore. If part of a group tour, you get a lovely vegetarian lunch served at the Po Lin monastery. Also plenty of cultural souvenir and more modern shops in the Ngong Ping cultural village. No problems with getting food, drinks and plenty of clean toilets too.

Aberdeen Fishing Village - have lunch or dinner at Jumbo's.

There are many museum's and art galleries. Very close to Star Ferry dock is the old clock tower and National Science Museum. You also have the Museum of Art, Museum of History and Space Museum these are all free.

Stanley Market; Is worth a visit, and HK is full of shopping malls selling handicrafts, local goods as well as high end designer goods. You can bargain a bit in the local shops but not the in malls.

Ocean Park, which has **giant pandas!**

A short walk down to road to The Peninsula Hotel, which is worth a visit. Stroll along Tsim Sha Tsui promenade.

If that way inclined then HK has its own Disney Land!

Shanghai



Shanghai, on China's central coast, is the country's biggest city and a global financial hub.

Once known as the Paris of the East, Shanghai now calls itself the Pearl of the Orient. It is China's largest and most cosmopolitan city and no other city can better capture the urgency and excitement of China's economic reform.

A port city, lying at the mouth of Asia's longest and most important river, the Yangtze, Shanghai's spectacular architecture is catching the world's attention. Charming old houses are making way for new museums, theatres and shiny new high-rises. But there is a comfortable blend of modern and traditional.

Note: 144-Hour Visa-Free Travel - Shanghai, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang have had a 144-hour visa-free transit policy for international passengers since January 30, 2016.

<http://www.chinahighlights.com/shanghai/144-hour-visa-free-travel.htm>

You can admire the exquisite Yu Garden with its Teahouse and Bridge of Nine Turnings or the Temple of the Jade Buddha. At the Shanghai Museum, you can peruse its works of art, which simultaneously draw you through the pages of Chinese history. But today in Shanghai, you can also enjoy the fast-paced lives of China's most glamorous, cosmopolitan and open people.

Suggestions

The Bund (Wai Tan); This is a wonderful place to feel the magnificence of Shanghai. The views at day are good and the night views are even better.

Shanghai Circus World; Great Entertainment, hour and a half of fun. The Era circus hall is well organized, easy to get to.

Oriental Pearl Tower (Dongfang Mingzhu); It can get a bit scary if you are afraid of heights. However, when you get up there to witness the magnificent view, that fear is erased. The floors are made of glass, which makes it easy to see the wonders beneath and around the tower.

Shanghai Tower; This is the second tallest building in the world and is a stunning piece of modern architecture. The unique spiral building is impressive from the outside, but it is the view from the top floor that will amaze you.

TAIWAN

Keelung



Keelung, officially known as Keelung City, is a major port city situated in the north-eastern part of Taiwan.

The port of Keelung is your gateway to Taiwan. Visit the bustling city of Taipei and other interesting areas surrounding on this fascinating island in the East China Sea. Taipei is approximately 16 miles southwest of the port. Taipei is easily reachable by train or bus.

Suggestions

Zhongzheng Park; Large statue of Goddess of Mercy and Buddha can be seen from the road. Beautiful temple had information signs posted in various languages. The grounds provide excellent harbour views.

Keelung Peace Island; An amazing coastline, with very unique geological rock formations from many years of ocean currents. Watch your step on wet and slippery areas, but make your way to the top and take in the spectacular views of the ocean and surrounding areas.

National Museum of Marine Science & Technology; This relatively new museum has a great assortment of interactive and educational displays in both English and Chinese.

However, Keelung is the Gateway to Taipei

Cruise ships dock right by central Keelung. The main train and bus station is a short distance away across the narrow harbour.

To get to Taipei, head first to Keelung train station where you can take either a direct bus or the train. Both run frequently from the train station. The train may be easier and avoids potential traffic, takes approximately 40-50 minutes, costs between NT\$43 - NT\$66, and arrives at Taipei Main Station. Schedules available here (search Taipei-Keelung and Taipei-Taipei) <http://www.railway.gov.tw/en/>

Several bus companies travel this route including Kuo Kang. Buses use two bus terminals beside Taipei Main Station. Kuo Kang buses use Kuo Kuang West Bus Station Terminal A, leave every 10-20 minutes, fare is NT\$55, and journey time is 50 minutes.

Once in Taipei, you can board the MRT (Rapid Transport) from Taipei Main Station to get around. A one day pass is NT\$200 (NT\$50 refundable deposit, Nov 2011). Single fares are based on journey distance and a token is issued instead of a ticket. Tap when entering and return it in the slot when exiting the gate.

<http://english.trtc.com.tw>

Kaohsiung



A modern city in the south of Taiwan, Kaohsiung shifts from ancient to contemporary culture with ease. Don't miss the breathtaking Fo Guang Shan monastery and its hall of giant Buddhas. Dream Mall, the largest shopping mall in Taiwan, has a Ferris wheel on the roof. Drive to Kenting National Park for beautiful landscapes.

Its focal point is the Love River, with walking paths and cafes along its banks, and cruise boats navigating its waters. Shopping options range from high-end malls to the Liuhe and

Ruifeng night markets.

Suggestions

Fo Guang Shan Buddha Memorial Centre is probably one of the highlights of any visit to Taiwan/Kaohsiung. But note that Fo Guang Shan Buddha Memorial Centre and Fo Guang Shan Monastery are two different places, although they are next to each other. The Memorial Centre is located outside Kaohsiung. There are several ways to get there but be prepared for travels up to two hours from Kaohsiung via public transport. The cheapest option is to take a train to a station with bus/taxi connections. While the journey sounds long, most people will find the trip worth it. There are some rules in place for visitors, and it's worth checking them out before visiting, dressing appropriately and avoiding flip flops are probably the key things to watch out for. There's also a huge signboard near the entrance suggesting itineraries if you only have 2, 3 or 4 hours to spare. Even in 3 hours you may not have time to visit both the Memorial Centre and the Monastery next door

Lian Lake is gorgeous! Try and take some time before leaving Kaohsiung to visit this place. You can spend anytime between 30mins (taking a few pictures and a quick walk) to 2hrs (taking your time to go into most of the pagodas). Here you will find the Dragon Tiger Tower. Apart from the cartoonish dragon and tiger at the entrances of the 7 story towers the most impressive features lie within them. There are tons of little carvings as you walk into the dragon's mouth to the first tower and then back out of the tiger's mouth from the second tower. Definitely an iconic landmark on the lotus pond. However, it is best to go early in the morning or in the evening as the heat can be quite torturous when walking between temples.

Taipei



Taipei is Taiwan's capital city and one of the world's most important commercial centres. Despite its turbulent history, Taiwan today boasts an economy that is the envy of the world. Modern Taiwan is a world leader in the production of bicycles, computer chips, plastics, chemicals and computer notebooks. Taipei is a sophisticated modern metropolis that has not forgotten its rich traditional past.

Internet: Try cafes and restaurants for free wifi. iTaiwan is a free nationwide wifi network. Tourists can sign up for free accounts with their passport at tourist info centres and offices in transport stations.

Suggestions

Chiang Kai Shek Memorial - There is a large bronze statue inside and a museum underneath. Free entry. MRT of same name.

Taipei 101 - Second tallest building in the world. 15 to 20-minute walk directly south from the Taipei City Hall MRT station.

Cruise Destinations

Longshan Temple - Officially named Mengjia Longshan Temple, this Buddhist temple is popular with tourists. Longshan MRT.

National Palace Museum - Originally located in Beijing's Forbidden City it was moved to Taiwan in 1949. It has the World's best collection of Chinese artefacts and antiquities. Take the MRT to Shilin and then bus or taxi.

VIETNAM

You are wise to enquire about visa requirements before you go. A visa for Vietnam is around £29. Your travel agent should be able to give you advice on this. Visit www.visa-for-vietnam.co.uk - the site is for airline arrivals, but will give you some idea of fees, etc.

US dollars are universally recognised for onshore shopping. Be sure to have them in small denominations - \$1, \$5, \$10 etc. - shopkeepers are wary of high value notes especially in any currency other than their own. The \$1's are also handy for 'tips'. Should you use your Credit Card for larger purchases or in a restaurant then be sure not to let it out of your sight, and be very aware of pickpockets!

Chan May



Chan May Port is located in the south-east corner of Thea Thiên-Hue Province, Vietnam.

This is mainly used for tours elsewhere.

Centrally located between historic cities, the working port of Chan May is the gateway to **Da Nang** - 18Km, **Hoi An** - 55Km, and **Hue** - 65K.

Danang



Da Nang is a coastal city in central Vietnam known for its sandy beaches and history as a French colonial port. It is a popular base for visiting the inland Bà Nà hills, located to the west of the city.

There are a few places to visit here but Danang town is not worth going into but it is a good place to be to take a trip to My Son and Hoi An.

If you are berthing here then the local taxi mafia will give you a hard time, just walk to the dock gates and negotiated with the local drivers. It is better if you get a small group of you, 8 or 10 is ideal. It is not too difficult to arrange things yourself if you have confidence in your bargaining abilities, do not arrange a tour from Danang with the official travel agents in Saigon.

Suggestions

Lady Buddha; Plain and simple, it is what it is. It is nice to see! There are a few temples around and some potted bonsai that are quite lovely! But it has great views over Danang.

Museum of Cham Sculpture; Its in a lovely Colonial building, right by the river. They have a good collection of statues and stone masonry from archaeological digs from the surrounding region.

Dragon Bridge; By day it's a bridge with character. But by night it is a bridge of changing colours and character.

Hoi An



Hoi An is a city on Vietnam's central coast known for its well-preserved Ancient Town, cut through with canals.

The former port city's melting-pot history is reflected in its architecture, a mix of eras and styles from wooden Chinese shop houses and temples to colourful French colonial buildings, ornate Vietnamese tube houses and the iconic Japanese Covered Bridge with its pagoda.

This city on the central Vietnamese coast is a well-preserved example of the important Southeast Asian trading port it was from the 15th-19th centuries. Already a common stop for backpackers, it is becoming better known to tourists. On the 14th day of each lunar month, the town trades its electric lights for traditional coloured lanterns.

Hoi An is beautiful but during the day it can be EXTREMELY HOT. There is not a lot of shade on the streets and very few shops/restaurants have air con (especially in the old town). It can also be hard to find somewhere to take a seat without having to buy something. Take a hat and sunscreen, cold water is cheap and sold in most shops.

Then almost every house in the old town sells the same tourist items as the next.

Suggestions

Hoi An Ancient Town; Every alley needs to be explored, as well as the many main streets and the market places. 2.5 days walking, shopping, relaxing, and eating were almost not enough.

Japanese Covered Bridge; An interesting historic place in great surroundings. 20 to 30 minutes is all you need to see all.

Fukian Assembly Hall; this place is one of the recommended place to visit. Chinese atmosphere and design. Take time to sit and work through the sculpting and carving; there's lots hidden to the immediate eye.

Have lunch in Hoi An. The local restaurants cater well for tourist and the cheap set menus have more than enough good food on them. A full day tour for 8 or 10 of you should also not cost more than \$120 (\$12 - \$15 per head).

Hue



Hue is a city in central Vietnam that was the seat of Nguyen Dynasty emperors and the national capital from 1802 to 1945. A major attraction is its vast, 19th-century Citadel, surrounded by a moat and thick stone walls. It encompasses the Imperial City, with palaces and shrines; the Forbidden Purple City, once the emperor's home; and a replica of the Royal Theatre.

If you are a history buff, or simply love discovering exotic cultures, Hue- Vietnam's former Royal Capital is definitely on the top list of your travel plan. The city represents the outstanding demonstration of the power of the vanished Vietnamese feudal empire, including a complex of monuments, tombs and pagodas that attract tourists coming from all over the world.

If you are visiting this place then there is so much to see and so little time, so do your research.

Cruise Destinations

Suggestions

Emperors Tombs; There are several tombs of ancient emperors scattering along the Perfume River: such as Minh Mang, Khai Dinh, Tu Duc, Dong Khanh, etc.

Royal Tombs; Every traveller should make time to visit this place. You won't regret it. Such a peaceful place and the scenery is just beautiful.

Hue Imperial City; Beautifully restored site, large, green, various buildings, some still in progress to be restored. This place is massive! You really do need a good few hours to look around properly. Try and remember how to get back to the exit.

Thanh Toan Bridge; Once you go through the bridge, you'll see a local market (if open) off in the near distance.

Ha Long Bay



Ha Long Bay, in northeast Vietnam, is known for its emerald waters and thousands of towering limestone islands topped by rainforests.

Towering limestone pillars and tiny islets topped by forest rise from the emerald waters of the Gulf of Tonkin. Designated a World Heritage site in 1994, Halong Bay's scatter of islands, dotted with wind- and wave-eroded grottoes, is a vision of ethereal beauty and, unsurprisingly, northern Vietnam's number one tourism hub.

Sprawling Halong City (also known as Bai Chay) is the bay's main gateway but its high-rises are a disappointing doorstep to this site. Most visitors opt for cruise-tours that include sleeping on board within the bay, while a growing number are deciding to eschew the main bay completely, heading straight for Cat Ba Island from where trips to less-visited but equally alluring Lan Ha Bay are easily set up.

All visitors must purchase entry tickets for the national park (40,000d) and there are also separate admission tickets for attractions in the bay, such as caves and fishing villages (30,000d to 50,000d).

Suggestions

A quick Google will find this bit of information. If Ha long Bay is heaven, Ha long City can be hell. Overdeveloped but under loved, the hideous high-rise hotels come in every shade of pastel and the beaches are definitely not the best in the region. The capital of Quang Ninh province it is sin city, with 'massage' heavily promoted at every hotel.

Therefore, the main, and only, attraction in Ha long is the limestone pillars. However, Hanoi is 165Km away, about 3 hrs by car/coach.

Cruise Destinations

Hanoi



Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam, is known for its centuries-old architecture and a rich culture with Southeast Asian, Chinese and French influences. At its heart is the chaotic Old Quarter, where the narrow streets are roughly arranged by trade. There are many little temples, including Bach Ma, honouring a legendary horse, plus Dong Xuan market, selling household goods and street food.

Suggestions

The Imperial Citadel of Thang Long is an intriguing relic of Vietnam's history and, signifying its historical and cultural importance, is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Standing 40 metres high, the central flag tower is the most recognizable feature of the Imperial Citadel and is often used as a symbol of Hanoi.

Water Puppet Theatre, The ancient art form of water puppetry has a long association with Hanoi and there are several theatres where guests can enjoy this uniquely Vietnamese take on Asia's puppet tradition. The original - and widely regarded as the best - theatre in town is the Thang Long Puppet Theatre.

Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, Ho Chi Minh has left an indelible mark on Vietnamese history and he is revered in Hanoi as the country's greatest leader. Nicknamed 'Uncle Ho' by locals, his preserved body is now laid to rest in a glass case in the Ba Dinh area of Hanoi. This is more than a tourist attraction, it is a part of living history and a visit here stays long in the memory.

Hoan Kiem Lake (Turtle Lake) is a central feature of Hanoi and is a popular hangout spot throughout the day with locals and tourists. Ngoc Son Temple sits on a small island in the centre of the lake and linked by a bridge, makes a beautiful background for a few photos. Around sunset this area becomes especially busy with joggers and couples enjoying the relaxing views across the lake.

Ho Chi Min City (Saigon)



Your ship may dock at one of the commercial ports where it would be better to take the ships shuttle bus into the centre. Most ship shuttles will drop you by the Rex Hotel (lunch on their garden terrace on the 5th floor is OK).

If you are at the main port in town it is really easy to get into the centre of town. Walking around town is no problem but crossing the road is an experience.

You may also dock at [Phu My](#).

Suggestion

First: Beware of bag snatchers on scooters and pickpockets in crowded areas like the market.

It depends how long you are going to be in Saigon. If you are there for more than a day then the first day you can possibly go to the Mekong Delta. It is about 80km so is a fair journey (roads are busy) but you can easily arrange a vehicle and English speaking driver for \$120 for the day.

Cruise Destinations

At the Mekong Delta you can go on a boat trip - they usually ask for \$15 per person but you should be able to get it for \$12 or \$13. They will take you to one of the islands where you will see some local dancing and singing, and you can taste some of the crystallised ginger and other goodies that they will be making. You are also pretty certain to be given things like honey tea and black banana wine. They are very well geared up for tourism at the Delta. Don't forget to tip your driver/guide and your boatman/guide.

Must See Sights

Be careful when planning to visit Ho Chi Minh City attractions since they typically close for a long lunch break.

- **Post Office and Notre Dame Church** - These are beside each other about two blocks away from City Hall. The post office is famous for being designed and constructed by Gustav Eiffel. The interior has hardly been touched since it was built and is dominated by a huge portrait of Ho Chi Minh. The twin towers of Notre Dame Cathedral have been a familiar landmark in Ho Chi Minh City since the 1880s. In front of the cathedral in a small garden is a delicate statue of the Virgin Mary. The interior of the cathedral is rather plain, unlike most French cathedrals, with no stained glass but it is a cool escape from the heat outside.
- **Reunification Palace** - This is the former presidential palace where tanks crashed through the gate ending the Vietnam War. The tanks are displayed outside. Be sure to visit the basement to see the war rooms. 30,000 vnd entry, closed 11am-1pm for lunch.
- **War Remnants Museum** - This museum has artifacts from the Vietnam war. Try to have an open mind to see the war from the Vietnamese perspective. 15,000 vnd entry, local currency only, closed 12-1:30pm for lunch. A block north of Reunification Palace on Le Quy Don and Vo Van Tan.
- **Cholon (China Town) and Thien Hau Pagoda** - Cholon is in District 5 and is a maze of narrow streets, bustling with people. Most of Vietnam's ethnic Chinese live here and they are the largest single ethnic minority group in the country. Merchants began to settle in Cholon in the 1770s, although many ethnic Chinese fled the country in 1975. You may not have time to visit if you only have a couple of hours in the city.
- **Water Puppet Show** - Water puppetry is performed in a chest-deep pool of water, with the water's surface as a stage. The puppeteers stand behind a curtained backdrop. First performed a thousand years ago on the surface of ponds and paddy fields in Vietnam's Red River Delta, water puppetry (roi nuoc in Vietnamese) is the lively creation of farmers who spent their days in flooded rice fields. Available at several locations but again, you may not have enough time.
- **Cu Chi Tunnels** - An immense network of connecting underground tunnels used during the war. They are part of a much larger network of tunnels of around 200Km long that is well known nationwide and worldwide. The underground network provided meeting rooms, sleeping quarters, commanding rooms, hospitals, and other social rooms. There are two main sites located a fair distance from HCMC so you may need to visit on a return trip.
- If you were hoping to visit the old US Embassy, the building was demolished in 1998 and the site turned into a park for the US consulate.

Visit here for more ideas: <http://cruiseportwiki.com/PhuMy>

Nha Trang



Nha Trang is a coastal resort city in southern Vietnam known for its beaches, diving sites and offshore islands. Its main beach is a long, curving stretch along Tran Phu Street backed by a promenade, hotels and seafood restaurants.

The shoreline has been given a huge makeover in recent years, with parks and sculpture gardens spread along the impressive promenade, while the streets inland reveal some quirky boutiques and a cosmopolitan array of dining options.

Nha Trang Information Center (Nha Trang Live) Cold drinks and coffee are provided every time you enter Nha Trang Live. Free wireless Internet is also available.

Suggestions

Po Nagar Cham Towers; This place shows impact of Hinduism on various countries. It is very close to downtown of nha trang so you can have a quick tour any time of day. You get there from centre with the number 4.bus. cost 7000vnd. The entrance fee to Po Nagar is 22000vnd. If you want to go to have a look inside the temple you have to borrow a free special suit which will cover your body if you have not covered arms and legs. Photos are not allowed.

Nha Tho Nui; The rock cathedral is very famous in Nha Trang. It is not far from Nha Trang station.

Long Son Pagoda; This is a wonderful pagoda with great architecture. One has to remember that this is a holy place where people come to worship Buddha. Up behind the pagoda there is a large white reclining Buddha and further on up is a giant white sitting Buddha.

Aerial cable cars cross over to Hòn Tre Island. From the harbour you can take the cable car over to the island.

Phu My



Phu My is a commercial port with nothing nearby. Cruise ships dock at container terminal piers at the port. A shuttle may be provided to the small town of Ba Ria approx 10 miles to the southeast where you can take a taxi to the beach resort city of Vung Tau.

- Please do NOT take the hydrofoil/fast ferry to Saigon since it is old and unreliable.
- Be advised that the Vietnam tour guides require your passport details in advance to arrange port passes.
- The permit to pick tourists up at the port is compulsory to the company if tourists want to be safe and legal. Expecting to pay US\$25-30 pp for port fees though "unofficial" fees may be less. If not, you need to walk outside of the port.

However, Phu My (pronounced Foo Me) is the port for **Ho Chi Minh City** which is an hour and a half away (80 miles) over a new expressway. The best way to get to Ho Chi Minh City is either with the ship's or a private tour. Taxis may wait outside the port gates.

CAMBODIA

Sihanoukville



This is Cambodia's premier beach town. white sand beaches and warm Gulf of Thailand waters combine with a laid back, beachy atmosphere to provide a great little tropical getaway.

This is the place to unwind by the beach, enjoy the fresh from-the-ocean seafood, take in a snorkelling or scuba trip, and generally slow-down, lay back and chill-out.

Now, if you are thinking of Angkor Wat Temple then think again, this is about 9 hours by road. So, definitely not an

excursion to make on a day visit.

Suggestions

Many close by stops await you outside downtown Sihanoukville. The fishing village at Stung Hauv, Kbal Chhay Waterfalls, Ream National Park, day trips to the islands. You can even holiday in the coastal towns of Kampot, Kep and Bokor Mountain, just 2 hours away. Lots of boat trips to the islands.

Many vacation activities around town are related to the beaches. Swimming and sunning, trips to the islands, fishing, and snorkeling. Within town, there are many themed restaurants and bars owned by people from all over the world. Buddhist temples, mountain biking, dirt biking, walking around downtown and the central market, shopping, Mini Golf, Chinatown, and seeing the Cambodian culture are also popular activities. Scuba Diving is also very popular.

Beaches and Islands

The town of Sihanoukville is surrounded on 3 sides by the Bay of Thailand. From the beaches and surrounding hills, many of the country's small islands can be seen. Many of the beaches are filled with grass hut restaurants and bars, some of the beaches are rocky, a couple are big resorts, and some are pure sandy beach. A dozen Islands surround Sihanoukville, and these are fairly unspoiled for the moment. Beaches, forest treks, diving, swimming, and chilling are the main activities here.

Some of these Sihanoukville beaches are crowded with beach chairs, umbrellas, bars, and people. Some are just filled with sand. A few beaches are rocky, and nice to look at, but not for swimming. From most Cambodia beaches, you can take trips to the islands, and rent boats for snorkeling and fishing.

THAILAND

Khlong Toei

Khlong Toei is a district in central Bangkok, long known for its slum. It is bordered by the Chao Phraya River and contains major port facilities. It is also the site of a major market, the Khlong Toei Market.

It is one of the ports for Bangkok. It is 15Km about 25 mins away.

Bangkok



Bangkok is an eclectic, sprawling city with a never-ending supply of things to see and do. This means that if you've only got one full day in the Thai capital it's more important than ever to make sure it counts.

You could berth at Khlong Toei or Laem Chabang

Suggestions

There is much to see here, so start with the Grand Palace with its emerald Buddha and follow this with a river tour up and down the Klongs. Fascinating to see all the huts on their stilts where people live and see them bathing in the river and washing their clothes.

For an excursion and a hands on experience then try the Ayutthaya Elephant Village, ride the elephants, feed the babies and help wash and bath them, lovely and they are really well cared for.

Shopping wise, don't bother with Chatuchak market, too hot and too large and difficult to navigate around. Suan Lum night market is much better (there is food and drink and live music plus hundreds of stall to do shopping in) Be warned that PatPong is another touristy shopping area but it is also a bit sleazy with dodgy bars and sex shows.

If you are thinking about a tuk tuk rides, they are small, cramped and uncomfortable, the drivers ride like maniacs, so you are taking your life in your hands and if you check insurance cover, you may not be covered in case of accident or injury.

Ko Samui



Ko Samui, one of Thailand's largest islands in the Gulf of Thailand, is known for its palm-fringed beaches circling coconut groves and dense, mountainous rainforest. It's also home to luxury resorts, posh spas and a rowdy nightlife scene that often attracts a backpacker crowd. The 12m-tall golden Big Buddha statue at Wat Phra Yai temple is a local landmark.

Cruise Destinations

Suggestions

Big Buddha Temple (Wat Phra Yai) is definitely a landmark that you should hit, if only because it's so distinctive. However, other than viewing the Buddha, there's not a lot to do, though, so don't put a whole day aside for it. The Buddha itself and the steps leading up to it are gorgeous (the steps are inlaid with beautiful mosaics) and make for a great picture opportunity. There are a number of stairs to climb but there are lovely views to be seen. Please be respectful in dress, ladies you need to cover your visible body parts such as legs and shoulders.

Wat Plai Laem It's only a 10 minute walk from big Buddha. This is a very beautiful temple with lovely art inside a must see for temple lovers and those who enjoy Thai culture must have a look. Make sure you pay 10baht to get fish food to feed the fish!

Laem Chabang



Much of Laem Chabang's old laid-back charm remains. Located on Thailand's east coast, this tranquil region of fruit orchards, gem mines and oyster and orchid farms, is now also a great place for swimming, snorkelling and experiencing traditional Thai village life.

Laem Chabang is a large commercial port in the Chonburi Province, Thailand. There is not much in the area. You can buy souvenirs and get a massage at the cruise terminal and there is a shopping center, Harbour Mall, on the main road by

the entrance to the port with a Tesco/Lotus supermarket.

Your cruise ship may provide a shuttle to Pattaya dropping off at Siam Bay View Hotel between Soi 9 & 10 and near Mike Shopping Mall and Central Festival Mall.

Smaller ships may head up the Chao Phraya River and dock at Khlong Toei Port relatively close to Bangkok's city center. Khlong Toei also is the site of a large food market.

You will be hard pressed to know what to do first when you visit the fascinating nearby capital of Bangkok, a treasury of old temples, fine palaces and extravagant art.

Laem Chabang is your gateway to **Bangkok**.

Phuket



Phuket, a rain forested, mountainous island in the Andaman Sea, has some of Thailand's most popular beaches, mostly situated along the clear waters of the western shore.

Thailand's Phuket is one of its most popular resorts and a wonderful place to enjoy a 'chill out' day.

Suggestions

The Gibbon Rehabilitation Project near Bang Pae Waterfalls, or at Phuket's elephant sanctuary, where you can ride one of

these magnificent creatures along a woodland trail and reward it with a lunch of bananas.

Boat Tours in Phuket; There are many tour companies in and around the town area who will offer trips to the Similan Islands National Park. This is a day trip from Phuket, and most include lunch and snacks.

Cruise Destinations

Phuket Big Buddha; The big Buddha is a very spiritual place. The project is funded by public donations, however it is free to visit and then you can donate money & buy souvenirs. This is a huge part of culture in Phuket & is well worth a visit - even if you are not a Buddhist.

Beaches

Phuket's south coast offers its most popular beaches. The north is more tranquil. Koh Phi Phi, Phang Nga Bay and Patong Beach are popular spots. Diving, snorkelling, wind surfing and sailing are just a few active options.

Bustling Patong Beach has the best range of shops, market stalls and places to eat but Kalim Beach, north of Patong, is removed from the main hustle but still close enough to be lively. While enjoying your Phuket cruise you can try parasailing or jet skiing, or simply relax with an exquisite beach massage.

Snorkellers will be in heaven at unspoiled Karon Beach.

MALAYSIA

Currency required is MYR \$ or the Malaysian ringgit. You will need to exchange currency at money exchangers or at banks. The money exchangers are in small kiosks located in all the main shopping complexes (just ask at the info point/desk) and they offer a better rate than banks or the cruise ship. Don't bother exchanging before you get to Malaysia, the rate when you buy in the UK is woeful. Always ask for plenty of small denomination notes, as some traders will not be able to change a large denomination note. Also small denominations are very useful for tips and taxi fares, and also the LRT system.

Most major shops will also accept credit cards but wise to check first. **Do not let your card out of your sight.**

Kuala Lumpur



From where you berth, **Port Kelang**, to City centre is about 90 min by coach. There are huge shopping malls but there are also the old traditional areas which are well worth searching out.

Try a trip called Kuala Lumpur on your own. During the trip to the city the guide will inform you about the city and the transport systems. You are dropped off at the Petronas Towers armed with a map of the city.

Head for the Light Railway System, a similar system to Singapore and easy to use. The LRT is definitely the way to travel here as the roads are very congested. The trains are inexpensive, clean, fast and reliable and run every few minutes and have air conditioning.

Taxis are also very cheap and plentiful but be aware of the following; by law all drivers are supposed to use the meter, but many don't around KL, and people do get ripped off. It happens to both locals and tourists. So always insist that they use the meter, or you won't get in, or negotiate a set fare beforehand with the driver.

There is a HOHO bus scheme, and I believe one of them is absolutely free and covers all major stops and tourist attractions.

Suggestions

Petronas Twin Towers; previously the tallest buildings in the world before the Burj Khalifa eclipsed it, make sure you book fast track tickets online before you go, as numbers are limited and you don't want to spend your time queuing first thing in the morning for tickets. Views from the Observation Deck are phenomenal.

Cruise Destinations

Menara KL/ KL Tower; located near the ShangriLa Hotel in KL - fees are cheaper than for the Twin Towers and the views are excellent. You can always pop into the ShangriLa hotel afterwards to use their facilities and then enjoy a cool drink/ tea/ coffee in their lobby lounge along with one of their amazing cakes.

Bird Park - nominal fees charged

Butterfly Gardens - nominal fees charged

Aquaria KLCC (located at KLCC/ Petronas Twin Towers) - fees payable

The National Museum (located very close to Perdana Botanical Gardens) - nominal fees charged. Think it's about RM\$5 per person for entry. Loads of info about Malaysian archeology, origins and culture.

The Old Railway Station with its colonial architecture (free)

The National Mosque (free entry when it's not prayer time but please dress modestly)

Both the national mosque and railway station are located very close to each other

Sir Maha Mariamman temple (again, free entry but you will need to remove your shoes)

Sun Sze Si Ya Taoist temple (free entry)

Both temples listed above are located very close to Chinatown/ Petaling Street.

Try a visit to the Central Market area which was built in the late 19th century, it is huge and houses a mixture of stalls selling different types of goods both upmarket stalls, craft, antiques, curios, souvenir stalls and food courts. It is a Cultural centre and there are many local artists and craftsmen who demonstrate their skills. The market is colourful with lots of character. There are plenty of good eating areas located inside, somewhere to sit down and have a snack and cold drink, with free wifi for patrons, the public toilets are chargeable but very clean and well maintained.

Next try the Chinese area, spend time soaking up the atmosphere and haggling with the traders. If you are looking for lunch there are lots of food stalls where you can purchase a very inexpensive lunch.

Chinatown/ Petaling Street - great place to walk along, soak up the atmosphere and haggle like crazy with the traders, be aware that a lot of the goods sold (e.g. Bags and Jewellery) will be counterfeit. The street will be quiet during the day, plenty of stalls still, but only really comes alive at night.

A little further afield:

Batu Caves. You can take a train from KL Sentra station to Batu Caves, takes about 30 mins and costs about RM\$5 per person. Or jump in a taxi once you have negotiated the fare. It's a place of religious importance to the Hindus. Worth seeing and doing, you have climb up 272 or so steps to get to the top, and will encounter lots of naughty little monkeys hoping to get some food from you, but the views are lovely. There are limestone caves/ statues of deities located at the top.

Entrance is free, but they also offer additional tours into the dark caverns and those are charged at a nominal rate. Please see tripadvisor for more info/ pics.

Melaka/ Malacca Would advise that if you want to see Melaka, do it only as a ship's excursion. It's about 1.5 hours drive from KL, and designated as UNESCO World Heritage site. Huge amounts of culture and history to see, great food (this where Nyonya/ Peranakan cooking comes from) with good shopping on Jonkers Street.

Kota Kinabalu



Kota Kinabalu is the capital of Malaysia's Sabah state in the northern part of the island of Borneo. Often referred to as KK, it's a coastal city partly surrounded by rainforest.

Kota Kinabalu on the island of Borneo is the bustling gateway to acclaimed Kinabalu National Park.

From my research, There is not a lot here. Maybe a ships tour?

Suggestions

Marlin Statue; This statue is iconic to KK as its located in front of the waterfront. An idle place to watch the sunset across the bay and the islands.

Monsopiad Cultural Village; Main attraction there is the house of skulls. 42 real human skulls, lined up on the top of the room. Signifies a person's strength and power back in the days when the kadazans still practice head hunting.

KK is the gateway to Kinabalu National Park, of which the highest point is Mt Kinabalu at 13400 feet. So great for those who want to go climbing.

For those who wish to go jungle trekking, look at Crocker Range national park.

Excursions

Worth considering as part of a ship's excursion....

Tunku Abdul Rahman marine Park for snorkelling and diving,

KK city mosque,

Mari Mari Cultural Village,

KK Bird Sanctuary, or,

Island hopping trips to nearby Sapi, Mamutik and Manukan Islands.

Alternatively, depending on where your ship is docked, take a taxi to a nearby five star hotel and spend the day enjoying their beach and pool facilities. ShangriLa hotel group has two five star hotels located in the area, Tanjung Aru Beach is meant to be quite lovely .

Langkawi



Langkawi, officially known as Langkawi the Jewel of Kedah is an archipelago of 104 islands in the Andaman Sea,

Forested hills, romantic white-sand beaches and crystal-clear waters greet visitors to tropical Palau Langkawi, the largest of the 99 islands in Langkawi archipelago. Known mysteriously as "Legendary Island" because of myths associated with its ancient geological formations, it drifts serenely alongside Malaysia in the azure Andaman Sea.

Sample local cuisine at the night markets, hike to dramatic waterfalls or dive into an underwater marine park to take a guided glimpse at life beneath the sea.

The whole island has been designated as duty free, so prices will be a lot cheaper than in KL and Penang.

Cruise Destinations

Suggestions

Langkawi Cable Car; The skycab is a must do, but you need to do it on a clear day - not always easy in Langkawi due to hazy conditions. At the cable car there is a dome where you are treated to a 3 D rollercoaster experience projected onto the dome ceiling. There is good system in place to seat passengers and it runs smoothly. The staff are polite and friendly. The ride up is good with great views.

Langkawi Sky Bridge; A themed village offering shopping with some light entertainment for family and kids with 4 d shows and the highlight of travelling by cable car to the sky bridge offering a a stunning and breath taking view of langkawi. Once at the top you have the option to take a sky lift towards the sky bridge or make your way up and down a pathway which may be difficult for old aged people. The cable cars are categorised into VIP and normal cabs. Beware at various places they make a stops which is followed by a so called free photo option which is presented to you at the next boarding area of sky cab for a price.

Places worth visiting include; Telaga Tujuh Waterfalls, Mahsuri's Tomb, Crocodile Adventureland, Atma Alam Batik village where you are shown how they make batik from scratch and can pick up beautiful handcrafts, batik prints and silks quite cheaply, Langkawi Wildlife Park, and Pulau Payar Marine Park for diving/ snorkelling. There is also Oriental Village which is a large outdoor mall containing galleries, shops, spas and food outlets.

Lazy day? Spend the day on Pantai Cenang/ Cenang Beach or head across to Tanjung Rhu. The beach there is beautiful. Langkawi's beaches are far superior, cleaner and safer.

Penang



Penang is a state in Malaysia located on the northwest coast of Peninsular Malaysia, by the Strait of Malacca. A fascinating fusion of the East and West, Penang embraces modernity while retaining its traditions and old world charm.

Penang is a foodie haven.

Suggestions

Kek Lok Si Temple; Beautiful temple dedicated to the Bodhisattva Guan Yin. Perhaps the finest Buddhist temple in South East Asia, the Kek Lok Si temple stands majestically on a hill in Ayer Itam. There are several temples within the area. Make sure you visit the big prayer hall. A cable car takes you up to the top.

Dharmikarama Burmese Temple; This is quite a large complex but it is free, well maintained, and visited by lots of locals. A pair of elephants guards the entrance to this Burmese temple. Within the pagoda grounds is a Boddhi tree and a wishing pond. It is the scene of many festivities during the water festival in April. Walk around respectfully and watch the people worshipping in the different venues.

Penang Hill; Whoever visits Penang should try and visit this place. At 821m above sea level, Penang Hill visitors will be privy to some of the grandest colonial mansions (which are now restaurants and guests houses) while enjoying the cool, refreshing air and panoramic views of the island. Take a short 30-minute cable car ride up Penang Hill from the funicular station in Air Itam or trek up the hill via the Botanic Gardens - a three-hour hike through lush foliage of the rainforest.

Little India and Chinatown worth a visit.

Worth visiting the Pinang Peranakan Museum, Cheong Fatt Sze/ Blue Mansion, Penang Botanical Gardens, and Khoo Kongsi. Khoo Kongsi is a large Chinese clan house with very elaborate and highly ornamental architecture. The temple within is considered the finest clan temple in the country.

Cruise Destinations

The Entopia Butterfly Farm near Balik Pulau is worth a visit. It's a vast 'caged' area where butterflies of all sizes and colours fly free (and often land on you), together with a large collection of reptiles. Open daily from 9.00 am - 5.00 pm, and allow a good hour or two to cover everything.

Teluk Bahang Tropical Spice Gardens takes you on a walk through spice and flower forests, with a guide explaining what the various plants are. Quite a hilly walk, and probably not suitable for those with mobility issues, but worth it if you can manage it.

Excursion

'Butterflies, Fruits and Spices'. The reviewer said 'It did what it said on the tin' first stop is a tropical spice garden near Teluk Bahang, then onto a tropical fruit farm, The final stop was at the Entopia Butterfly Farm.

Beaches

It is not recommend to go swimming in the waters around Penang as there are LOADS of jelly fish. Water is not the cleanest either. Beaches are golden sand, okay quality but not the best. Langkawi's beaches are far superior, cleaner and safer.

Port Kelang



Port Klang is a town and the main gateway by sea into Malaysia.

Port Klang is 45km from Kuala Lumpur, and officially a 90min trip by road. A taxi will cost around 100myr one way (although prices do inflate a lot when a boat is in port). The port is not in a commercial area. So many taxis may appear reluctant to return passengers back to the port without some form of incentive. This applies to taxis from the city or from Port Klang KTM Komuter train station (see below)

back to the port.

Public transport is much cheaper and you will pay around 10myr per person one way, and you will have to change a couple of times. Port Klang is made up of three separate ports, Southport, Westport and Northport. The KTM Komuter train station is at Southport. The cruise terminal is at Westport. Westport is a good distance by road to Southport, a taxi can take you there. The main station in Kuala Lumpur is KL Sentral, just slightly south of the city centre. English is widely spoken and its a very easy to use system.

This link is a good one <http://www.myrapid.com.my/rail/routes> you would need to get from Port Klang.

If you fancy something closer then there is a regular 45 minute ferry service every day from Port Klang to Pulau Ketam (Crab Island). It is a mangrove covered island with a village built on stilts.

However, I would advise taking the ships transfer into the city, unless you're very comfortable with using the train system.

Port Kelang is the Gateway to **Kuala Lumpur**;

SINGAPORE

The Singapore Dollar is the currency of Singapore.

Singapore



Singapore, an island city-state off southern Malaysia.

Singapore is the world's busiest port, meaning that cruise ship passengers have to be transported at least to the port gates, which can be up to 5km from the ship's berth. Taxis ply for hire from the port gates.

It's always hot in Singapore - it's almost right on the equator.

This is one of those cities where you really need to plan what to do before going because there is such a lot in and around the city. There is something for everyone. Taxis are very cheap, the drivers love the British and are very helpful so once you have decided on what you are doing, make a list and give it to the taxi driver.

Now, as well as research what to do also find out what you cannot do. Ie spitting, feeding pigeons. These along with many others are criminal offences in Singapore.

Suggestions

If you have a head for heights the cable car across to Sentosa Island is not to be missed.

The Old Ford Factory on Upper Bukit Road, where the British formally surrendered to the Japanese in 1941. This is now a museum, detailing life before, during and after the Japanese occupation of Singapore. Admission charge is \$3. Then there is a visit to the botanical gardens and the night zoo again highly recommended.

Raffles Hotel, Beach Road. No-one should visit Singapore without trying a genuine Singapore Sling in the Long Bar at the Raffles Hotel, and take advantage of the chance to throw peanut shells all over the floor! It's not just something you're encouraged to do, it's almost compulsory. A real Sling will set you back around £20 but will taste totally different from 'unofficial' ones and you get free peanuts. Afternoon tea at Raffles (costing around £45 per person) is another treat, but is so popular it must be booked in advance, although you will probably find a ship tour that includes this.

Gardens by the Bay: A Must visit if you are traveling to Singapore. View of cloud forest is amazing. If you are there all evening, then do the gardens last to see the light show. Alternatively the light /music show kicks off about 8pm nightly on promenade near Merlion.

Try a visit to the National Orchid Gardens which is within the Botanical Gardens. The Botanical Gardens are free and are open 24/7, but there is a charge for the Orchid Gardens: the fee is on a sliding scale dependant on numbers, but expect to pay between five and ten \$Singapore.

Visit the fabulous Marina Bay Sands Hotel, it only cost 9 Billion dollars to build. It is huge. Three tall towers linked at the top by a boat shape, stunning is the word.

For something totally different try the visit to the Zoo to have Breakfast with Orangutans. Once you are seated and having breakfast the apes will swing in by ropes and trees at about 9:30 and joined you in their breakfast area next to the open air restaurant. After breakfast then have a tour around the zoo and see all the animals.

Try Little India and Chinatown are worth a look, especially if you take a tri-shaw ride, although the huge Bugis Street Market really only caters for skinny under-20s who like man-made fabrics.

Cruise Destinations

If you are here for a few days, before or after your cruise and want some clothes made the best place to go is Lucky Three Ent. 32-C Temple Street just off Orchard Road. He makes trousers and skirts in a day so get a taxi to the top of Temple Street, and go there first. He will send them to the ship/hotel but personally go back and collect them.

Further afield

Kranji War Memorial, Woodlands Road, about 20km from the city of Singapore. There are around 4,500 graves, and the names of a further 25,000 allied servicemen who died in South East Asia during WW2 are engraved on the Memorial Walls. The site is maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, and entry is free.

Changi Prison Chapel and Museums, upper Changi Road North, about 16km from the city of Singapore. The chapel is a replica of the one built by the prisoners of war who were held in Changi Gaol during the Japanese Occupation from 1942 to 1945. Next to the chapel is the Changi Prison Museum which contains an excellent collection of drawing, sketches and photographs by the prisoners of war depicting life inside Changi Prison during the Japanese Occupation. Together Changi Prison Chapel and Changi Prison Museum are memorials to the prisoners of war and their wartime experiences. Entry is free, although there is a very tempting souvenir shop at the exit!

INDONESIA

Bali



Depending on where you tender it can be a half hour tender ride into Benoa.

At the port you have to run the gauntlet of the hundreds of taxi drivers all vying for business. If you do decide to take a private trip in a car/taxi then it is worth knowing that the roads are very good but the drivers are maniacs. There is no speed limit and the traffic lights are merely suggestions rather than being adhered to. There are thousands of mopeds, bikes and scooters. The legal age is 17 but many

pre-teen and children are seen riding them. It is not unusual to see families of 3 or 4 riding on one moped weaving in and out of traffic

Suggestions

There is a Facebook page called Bali Bongans which is great if you want to know anything about Bali -e.g the going rate paid for drivers, what you should pay for a t-shirt and a lot of places you have to barter.

If looking for a private tour then for 6-8 hours the going rate is about AUD\$50.

If you are looking for a private tour guide try Bali Dean. You are met at the port and immediately provided with bottles of iced water. His car is modern and air-conditioned. If into snorkeling try the tour to the Blue Lagoon which is approx. 75 minutes' drive.

On the way you will see many temples and the country side of Bali. There are temples in abundance many highly decorated and some more simple. Dean will explain the difference between the temples to the Bad Gods and the Good ones. It is mainly the women who make the offerings to the Gods.

The Blue Lagoon is aptly named, however, the walk into the sea is not pleasant and the beach is full of debris but once in the water it is so clear. The coral is very colourful as are the fish. The snorkelling is some of the best. The facilities were very basic and it desperately needs some TLC

Cruise Destinations

On the way back you visit the Water Palace at Karangasem. This was built in 1909 for a King with 11 wives. It is very clean and white tiled but not the majestic accommodation you would have expected for a King, You can tour the inside and visit the Kings bedroom, its stunning gardens and views. It is still owned by one of the Royal families.

For many the overall view of Bali is that it is very dirty with lots of trash everywhere. There is no system in place for clearing up the mess and it will just continue to get worse. There are some beautiful places which are looked after but in the main the people just exist amongst the rubbish. It is a way of life for them and they probably don't even notice it.

Komodo



Komodo island, part of the Lesser Sunda chain of Indonesian islands, is the rugged habitat of the 3m-long Komodo dragon monitor lizard. Komodo National Park covers the entire region and is home to more than 4,000 dragons.

Suggestions

Normally this is a ships tour stop. But can be DIY with a little research beforehand. The walk up to the watering hole is easy walking and mostly level but very hot, so take plenty of water with you. However, it is an interesting walk with some facts told by your guide. Sightings of dragons is guaranteed. The only downside, is when the tour is finished you end up in a 'sales' area where the merchants try to pester you to buy stuff. There is no quiet shopping.

Semerang



Semarang city, the capital of Central Java province is located on the north Coast of Java Sea. Semarang is situated on Java's northern coast and is called the capital of Central Java, as it lies just about halfway between the extreme east and west coasts of the island.

The port is about 6km from the main town. Normally there is a shuttle service to the main shopping centre.

Suggestions

Candi Hill; for amazing scenery of the port, the lowlands and green paddy fields, the city itself and the surrounding mountains.

Sam Po Kong Temple; The temples honour Chinese Admiral Zheng He, who brought Islam to Indonesia. They are in tradition Chinese Temple style.

Central Java Grand Mosque; When you stay in Semarang, this mosque has to be visited. The biggest and modern mosque representative of Jawa Tengah province. It has 360 rooms at the top of tower.

Semawis Market; Sort of funfair, contains many food vendors, from snack to heavy meals.

Borobudur Temple; whilst a beautiful temple, be warned it is over 2 hours from the port. Entrance fee is AUD\$25pp.

SRI LANKA

Colombo



You generally berth at the port. There are some jewellery and souvenir stalls by the ship selling all kinds of stuff.

Getting to the city is fun. The taxi drivers at the port will only do 3, 4, or 5 hour tours. No one will take you into the city. It is run like the Mafia. So, a shuttle service, that is not allowed to start until 10:30, will take you to the Hilton hotel and the shopping centre at an old Racecourse. If you are heading for the city then you will be wise to take one of these. Some people who have been to the Racecourse

shopping centre said it was rubbish and a total waste of time.

The town is dirty smelly and very busy. Whilst walking around do not be surprised if you are accosted every few yards by people wanting to either sell something or show you something. Overall most cruisers think that it was not a nice place to visit with reports of the touts, tut tut drivers and aggressive taxi drivers just turning up at the mall and racecourse drop off points and terrorising the passengers. There has been stories of them not allowing passengers to reboard the shuttle buses to get back to the ship, and even ordering the shuttle bus drivers to drive off empty. So, you take your chance here. But if you do fancy getting off then.....

Suggestions

If you want to see some flavours of Sri Lanka then a ride in a Tuk Tuk to the market, only 200 rupees approx £1, is a hair raising experience. The market area is much the same as you get anywhere. There are loads of stalls selling the same tacky wares. If you stop to look at something you are immediately surrounded by guys with tape measures bringing out many different materials. It was a shame really because you do not get the chance to see the real market area and all the spices and flowers.

There is a Fort area where there were a few nice shops and restaurants. The bars around the fort were selling 3 bottles of local beer for 1,000 rupees, nice and cold on a hot day.

There is an 11 hour trip which included Kandy. This has received mixed reviews with some cruisers enjoying the trip, but other thought there is a lot of walking in debilitating heat and humidity.

Hambantota



The tranquil city of Hambantota, tucked in the south east corner of Sri Lanka, is rich in natural beauty and wildlife. Worth a visit are the temples at Kataragama and the Bundala National Park, home to lagoons, beaches and forestry with over 200 species of birds, including the Greater Flamingo.

This underdeveloped area was hit hard by the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.

Suggestions

Bundala National Park; Nice park with some stunning landscapes and lots of wildlife: elephants, crocks, buffaloes and a good variety of birds.

Mahapelessa Hot Springs; There are seven tank with seven different temperatures.

Cruise Destinations

Dry Zone Botanic Gardens; This was a lovely garden. It still has some development to finish. There are varieties of tree and cacti and some flowers. There is also monkeys, birdlife and some reptiles. But, it is missing an area to eat.

INDIA

Chennai



Chennai, formally Madras, on the Bay of Bengal in eastern India, is the capital of the state of Tamil Nadu. It is one of the biggest cultural, economic and educational centres in South India.

Chennai is the biggest economic, cultural and tourism centres in South India and among the most visited Indian cities by foreign tourists. The city of Chennai has been rated as the safest city in India and also listed among top 10 Indian city to travel for the year 2017. The city has second largest

collection of heritage buildings in India and one of the must visit Indian city with list of important tourist attractions.

Suggestions

Kalikambal Temple; Temples This temple is located at Mannady, at Thambu Chetty Street, George Town area of Chennai. The temple has other entrance at Armenian Street. What must be said is there are many many temples in and around the city and if you want to visit some of them then an excursion could be there way.

Gandhi Statue; Right on the road and close to the beach. It is just nice to spend a few minutes and get that picture. The area and statue could be maintained a little better.

The Rajiv Gandhi Memorial; a very pleasant and calm place to visit in Chennai. It is the place where the Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated. Seven pillars are erected to cover the blast site. The place is well maintained. It is very informative and a must visit see if you are in the area.

Fort St. George; The fort is relatively small and well preserved. It's not the typical forts that you can find in India but more of an European styled building with cannons. There are some nice collections of arms, uniforms and other items from the early British period in India.

Express Avenue Mall; For that all important shopping trip. It is a very big mall with all the branded stores under one roof.

Cochin



Kochi (colonial name Cochin) is a vibrant city situated on the south-west coast of the Indian peninsula in the breathtakingly scenic and prosperous state of Kerala.

Strictly speaking, Cochin is a small town. But, Cochin has outgrown its original bounds and is now the general name given to much of the region adjoining the original town, which now includes Cochin, Fort Kochi, Mattanchery, Ernakulam and many other nearby towns and villages.

Suggestions

Chinese Fishing Nets, Fort Kochi; The Chinese fishing nets (Cheenavala) are distinctly unique to Cochin. It is believed that traders from the court of the Chinese ruler Kublai Khan introduced these nets here. Oddly, these nets are found only in Kochi, outside China!

Cruise Destinations

St. Francis Church, Fort Kochi; It is the oldest church built by Europeans in India. On his 3rd visit to Kerala, Vasco da Gama.

Dutch Palace (Mattancherry Palace); The Dutch Palace was originally built by the Portuguese. Later, in 17th century, the Dutch modified it and presented it to the Raja of Kochi.

Boat ride; The backwaters separating Ernakulam from Fort Kochi and Mattanchery are dotted with many small and mid-sized islands. A boat ride through the backwaters is an unforgettable experience.

The Dhoby Khana laundry in Fort Kochi is worth a visit. It's an outdoor working laundry, from the days before washing machines! No entry fee, but they ask for a visitor donation to help keep costs down.

Excursion

'The Cochin Heritage Trail', a visit to the Dhoby Khana outdoor laundry the Chinese fishing nets some churches and a spice market. The cruiser who posted the review about this excursion said, not a good tour and certainly not one to be recommended.

Goa (Mormugao)



India's sunshine state of Goa has many natural riches: stunning beaches, fertile farmland, thick forests, lush river valleys and acres of peaceful coconut groves.

Located along the Arabian Sea, the main port Mormugao is tucked down in the Southern district. Away from the hippie party strip of the north, and a short drive from the busy port, you'll find a much quieter, more serene scene. With less development here, you can spread out and enjoy miles of blissful palm-fringed sand with gentle sound of lapping azure

water.

The cruise port of Goa lies in Mormugao. There is no terminal building and hardly any port facilities there.

The following information is taken from the Goan Cruise Ports web Page: *The tourist taxis at the gate are white. The official taxis of Goa are the regular yellow and black taxis, but you will find only tourist taxis (white ones) are waiting at the cruise dock. Aside from tourist taxi's yellow and black rickshaws are also waiting at the port gate. These taxis do not have a meter. Please be sure to make a price agreement before you step into the taxi. Taxis take US dollar and Indian Rupee. Try to negotiate a taxi for no more than 80 US dollars a day. We recommend you arrange for the taxi to stay with you all day long instead of finding a car on location to go back to port. Prices underneath are what a taxi should cost. Keep in mind it all depends on the supply and demand of taxis, therefore prices could vary.*

2 - 10 us dollars by rickshaw to Vasco da Gama (closest town)

20 us dollar to the beach

50 us dollars one way to Old Goa

60 - 80 us dollars full day

Public Transportation *From the port it is possible to take public transportation although we do not advise you to do so because it will not get you to any of the tourist sights and it might not be meeting your comfort level. Find the local bus stop on the square in front of the port exit. Pay the driver 3 Indian Rupee for a ticket.*

Cruise Destinations

Distance from port:

Vasco da Gama 4 km south of the port
Bogmala beach 12 km south of the port
Old Goa 30 km north east of the port
Panaji 34 km north east of the port
Sri Manglesh Temple 36 km east of the port
Fort Aguda 45 km north of the port
Dr. Salim Bird Sanctuary 32 km north of the port
Margao 28 km south of the port
Benaulim 36 km south of the port

Suggestions

Hire a taxi for the day, bargain hard, to show you around. Places to visit include Old Goa (a world heritage site) and Panjim, the state capital.

Mumbai



Mumbai (formerly called Bombay) is a densely populated city on India's west coast. A financial center, it's India's largest city.

It is famous for its chaotic streets. For bargains and people-watching, outdoor bazaars top the list of attractions. Popular waterfront destinations are Marine Drive, where visitors go to watch the sun set over the Arabian Sea, and the carnival-like Juhu Beach. More sightseeing options are the Gandhi Museum, in the leader's former home, and the cave temples

of Elephanta Island. For tranquillity, Mumbai has many religious sites, lakes and parks.

First stop is Indian immigration. So, passports ready.

Suggestions

Gateway of India; Anyone who visits Mumbai, has to visit Gateway of India. It is a must visit in any Mumbai itinerary. The majestic Taj Palace Hotel is just opposite Gateway.

Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus; Yes a train station. History of building and architecture intriguing. Lookout for the gun shot holes in wall.

Mani Bhavan Gandhi Museum; It is the inspirational museum of the well-known hero, Gandhi.

If you are looking to fully embrace the real Mumbai, then for a DIY try Grand Mumbai Tours. Highly recommended by many cruisers. You have a 6 hour private tour with Pranav the owner in an air conditioned large SUV type car which was great for getting in and out at all the stops.

There will be a number of passengers who take pencils a books and sweets to give to the children. Excellent idea if you are visiting.

New Mangalore



New Mangalore is the chief port city of the Indian state of Karnataka. It is located at Panambur about 10 km from the city of Mangalore. It is an important business and commercial centre for the export of coffee, spices and cashew nuts.

It is a place known for its temples and eagles. There are quite a lot of both in and around the area.

Suggestions

It is suggested that you do not use a taxi but arrange for a private tour beforehand. Here is a recommended one: <http://www.mangaloredaytours.com/> For around \$85 per person for a maximum of 18 persons in a 21 seater van.

The tour is described in this link. It includes

1. Pick up from the cruise terminal
2. Cashew factory visit
3. Kadri and Gogarnatha temple visit
4. Visit Central market
5. St. Aloysius Chapel visit
6. Orientation tour of Mangalore city
7. Drop you at the cruise terminal according to your schedule.

There are many temples to visit in Mangalore. Kudroli Gokarnath Temple is situated 3km away from main city area. Recently, this temple has been renovated and now a tourist attraction in Mangalore. Kadri Sri Manjunatha Temple is another ancient historic spot in Mangalore. The Kadri Temple dates back to about 1068 A.D. and sits at the foot of the highest hill in Mangalore.

Kadri Manjunath Temple; This is the oldest temple of Lord Manjunatha. It is a beautiful Temple with 7 ponds and couple of Caves which are believed to be used by Pandavas during their Vanavasa.

Kateel Shri Durgaparameshwari Temple; The Kateel Temple is considered as one of the holiest temple and people settled outside their home town make it a point to visit the temple whenever they visit home town. This holy temple of Shri Durgaparemeshwari is situated on an islet in the middle of the sacred river Nandini. amidst panoramic scenes and fascinating greenery. The temple is 29 km from Mangalore city in Dakshina Kannada district but for the adventurous it is quite easily accessible from Mangalore city by buses which frequently ply from city area.

ARAB STATES

Make sure you read up on local customs laws regarding morality and dress codes, and more importantly medication laws. Dubai and other UAE countries are very strict on these laws.

If you take medication on a regular basis or even just carry some, just in case, then do your research. There is a comprehensive list of forbidden items on the web site just google medicine and UAE. You are not checked any way but as long as you have the necessary paper work there will not be a problem. Paracetamol is allowed. Codeine without a prescription is not. However, some medicines are totally banned, doctors note or not, or whatever your friends say.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Abu Dhabi



The capital city of the UAE appears at first to be totally modern, but look closer and you will find older buildings and areas from before the oil boom years still remain. The city is spread over a vast area, and so ships operate shuttle buses from the port to one of the many shopping malls - Marina Mall is the biggest and is the most likely shuttle-stop.

Metered taxis can be hired wither in advance, at the quayside, or hailed in the street. Bus routes are limited, but some include a stop outside the Port Gate.

Worth visiting

Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque: One of the most opulent mosques in the world, it was built using artisans and materials from many countries and is 22,4122m in size, with room for around 41,000 people to be accommodated for prayers at any one time. Natural materials were chosen for much of its design and construction due to their long-lasting qualities, including marble, stone, gold, semi-precious stones, crystals and ceramics. The decoration throughout is stunning. All shoes must be removed before entering, and visitors are supplied with a bag to carry their footwear in. Visitors who use a wheelchair are provided with a 'clean' one to prevent dirt being transferred to the carpets. Free guided tours are available at certain times of the day. If you are female, be ready to cover up! Freshly-laundered abayas are provided for all ladies, and they are compulsory - you will even be stopped from taking photographs in the grounds if you are not wearing one. They are, however, very lightweight and not at all oppressive. And it's quite fun when you're in a group as none of the men can tell which wife is which!

Heritage Village: The Heritage Village is close to the Marina Mall, making it handy for the shuttle buses. It is a reconstruction of a traditional oasis village, which provides an interesting glimpse into the emirate's past. Traditional aspects of the desert way of life, including a campfire with coffee pots, a goats-hair tent, and a falaj irrigation system, are displayed in the open museum.

There are workshops where craftsmen demonstrate traditional skills, such as metalwork, pottery, weaving and spinning. The craftsmen are happy to share their skills, and you may get the chance to try them for yourself. Along with a range of craft/gift stalls there is also a little spice shop where you can get a range of dried herbs, handmade soap and plenty of chatter.

Cruise Destinations

Further afield

Falcon Hospital: Situated 6km from the International Airport, the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital is the world's largest, and most advanced, falcon hospital. Its highlight is a falcon display museum as well as a facility with free-flying falcons. You can visit the wards where the birds are kept, explore the museum which gives an insight into the noble desert sport of falconry, or try your hand at the pursuit in the lush gardens. Guided tours of this specialist hospital lasting two hours are available, costing around AE\$170 per adult, AE\$60 per child. Price includes refreshments and a souvenir photo. Tours can be pre-booked online.

Dubai



Dubai is a city in the United Arab Emirates known for luxury shopping, ultramodern architecture and a lively nightlife scene. Burj Khalifa, an 830m-tall tower, dominates the skyscraper-filled skyline. At its foot lies Dubai Fountain, with jets and lights choreographed to music. On man-made islands just offshore is Atlantis, the Palm, a resort with water and marine-animal parks.

Dubai has always served as a bridge between East and West. In the past, Dubai's trade links stretched from Western

Europe to Southeast Asia and China. The result was the creation of one of the most protean societies in the world. Nestled in the very heart of Islam, Dubai remains unique in its embrace of the West. Bedouin may still roam the desert, but Dubai also plays hosts to international tennis and golf tournaments. Tourists flock to its shores while the pace of development continues at a frenetic pace, from massive artificial islands to the astounding Burj Al Arab Hotel.

Dubai is actually two cities in one: the Khor Dubai, an inlet of the Persian Gulf, separates Deira, the old city, from Bur Dubai.

First on the agenda is Dubai immigration process. So passports ready.

Suggestions

Burj Khalifa: with the most amazing view of Dubai skyline. It's a beautiful building inside and outside. At night it is all lit up and the illuminations are well worth watching. There are two gift shops inside and plenty of viewing space, even when busy. Top tip # 1, Book your visit on line or you could be queuing for hours. choose a slot to suit you, Top Tip # 2, Go during office hours. The morning is the quietest time, Top Tip # 3, If the queue to go down becomes biblical, walk up a floor, this queue is sometimes shorter.

Burj Al Arab: It was the tallest hotel in the world until a few years ago and also the icon of Dubai. People recognized Dubai by this hotel and it does justice to its name. However, Please be aware that unless on a specific bus tour you have to book in advance to get to the hotel. You are also advised that there is a minimum spend of Dirham 500 per person which is pretty excessive to walk around a lobby.

Dubai Fountains: The fountains are simply genius! It is amazing how they do it, the height the fountains reach and the patterns they make and so colourful too! Simply the best fountain show you will ever see. Tip, get yourself a table at one of the restaurants overlooking the fountain pool. Access these through the Dubai Mall. Have a drink, order some food and enjoy. The display is fabulous. Get your camera charged before you go.

Dubai Mall: the Mall itself is spectacular: 1200 shops and 200 cafes and restaurants, and all beautifully decorated and maintained. Very high-end, most of it: There is also a Waitrose there.

Cruise Destinations

Excursions

'Sundowners and Burj Khalifa Fountains'. You are taken to the amazing Burj al Arab hotel, where you are treated to non-stop drinks and canapes. It is a tremendous place - even the loos are worth photographing. From there you go to the Dubai Mall

Sir Bani Yas Island



Sir Bani Yas is a natural island located 170 km southwest of Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates.

Here you can encounter the free roaming wildlife and beautiful rugged landscapes of Abu Dhabi's stunning Sir Bani Yas Island from inspirational settings, culminating in the ultimate Arabian island experience.

Upon docking, passengers will be able to spend the day exploring Sir Bani Yas and its wide range of activities that include the popular Nature & Wildlife Drive, horseback riding, mountain biking, land sailing, archery, kayaking, snorkelling, diving, pearl diving, and much more.

They will also be able to relax with Anantara Spa's signature treatments, and sample the delicious cuisine available at the Desert Islands Resort & Spa, Al Sahel Villa Resort, and Al Yamm Villa Resort, all managed by Thai-hospitality group Anantara.

Suggestions

Sir Bani Yas Island is famous for its wildlife. Anantara resort at the island conducts wild life safari's. Also they have cultural tours and adventure activities. You can check their website for the details.

<http://www.sirbaniyaisland.com/Adventure-Activity/8/NATURE---WILDLIFE-DRIVE>

From my research I cannot find many DIY activities here.



BAHRAIN

Manama



Manama, is the modern capital of the Persian Gulf island nation of Bahrain, has been at the centre of major trade routes since antiquity and is a major financial centre with a thriving economy.

Although Bahrain is an Islamic country, alcohol is legal, and Manama has a thriving nightlife, with clubs and bars popular with visitors from all over the world. The narrow rows of stalls at the Bab el-Bahrain souk are famous for their vast array of perfumes, spices, and gold.

Suggestions

Bahrain National Museum; Its relatively small as a national museum but rich with collections. 5000 years history of Bahrain are displayed for the visitors, especially the collection of Dilmun Burial mounds. Unlike other museum you can take lots of photograph inside the museum.

Al-Fatih Mosque (Great Mosque); definitely worth every minute. An extremely well organised tour. Ladies are offered abayas to wear and scarves, you can bring your own if you preferred. There are friendly staff to help you fit your Abaya and hijab. The talk is informative and the staff go out of their way to make you feel welcome.

Bahrain International Circuit; for you F1 freaks. It is simply an amazing experience. There are many events going on in the circuit

Qalat al Bahrain; This place is also known as Fort of Bahrain. It is located quite close from Al-Seef Mall & Karbabad beach.

Lost Paradise of Dilmun Water Park; Something new to do in Bahrain. They have nice variety of rides that can be suitable for all the family.

OMAN

Khasab



Khasab is a city in an exclave of Oman bordering the United Arab Emirates. It is the local capital of the Musandam peninsula and has frequently been dubbed the "Norway of Arabia" because of its extensive fjord-like craggy inlets and desolate mountainscapes.

Suggestions

Oman Fjords; An absolute must - see, the scenery is fantastic, the fish are beautiful and the dolphins are great! The barren rocky mountains rise from a gorgeous clear turquoise sea to touch the sky. There are almost no people in this part of the world so you really do feel like you have escaped to Mars.

Khasab Castle; The castle is walking distance (around 20 min) from the port. The exhibits inside are interesting, there is also video and audio in some rooms. The entrance fee is cheap-\$2 per person. (2016)

Cruise Destinations

Khasab Fort; Another great Omani fort that has been well preserved and updated with interesting and historical information and exhibitions. Worth visiting, even with young children.

Khor Fakkan



Khor Fakkan is a town on the Gulf of Oman, in the United Arab Emirates. It centers on Khor Fakkan Bay, home to the curved Khor Fakkan Beach and a deep-sea port. A promenade runs along the beachfront, against the backdrop of the dramatic Hajar Mountains.

Meaning "Creek of Two Jaws" Khor Al Fakkan sits on its namesake bay on the eastern coast of the UAE. On the surface Khor Al Fakkan may seem peaceful and maybe even a little sleepy, but it's an excellent jumping off point for

adventures in the nearby Hajar Mountains.

You will berth in a very large container port. There will be shuttles to take you out of the port because walking through it is forbidden.

Beware; if you are going to relax on the beach then you will need to cover up, this is a very conservative emirate, so Western-style bathing suits are not allowed.

Suggestions

Aside from the beaches, tourists also visit this port town because of the massive mountains. You will feel very much in tune with nature just by looking at these awe-inspiring mountains.

One of its most popular spots is the Al Wurrayah Falls. This is one of the most popular falls in UAE.. However, at present this is closed with no sign of a reopening date.,

Beach

The beach is one of the popular destinations for families during holidays and winter season. It is located along Fujairah-Dibba road. It is very clean with clear blue water. There are lawns and trees along the beach. It is a good place for relaxing and jogging. Most of the beach activities like riding Jet Ski (Water Bike), Speed Boating, Para-Sailing, Kite Flying etc., are available in the beach. There are also kids playgrounds in the sandy beach. Many restaurants are available but the majority of them are expensive.

Muscat



The sail in is very picturesque but where you actually dock is anything but. It is a working port with absolutely no facilities.

The city is spotlessly clean, it is beautifully kept with marble pavements and ornamental decorations of different fish all along the promenade area. Every roundabout is decorated in a different way.

Many people prefer this city to Dubai.

Cruise Destinations

Suggestions

Try a great relaxing day at the Dive Centre beach. This is about a 25 minute drive on fast new roads. The beach is in a bay surrounded by sandy mountains. There are beach chairs and shade or sun. It has a restaurant and bar and good changing facilities and showers. The water is very shallow and you can walk out at least 150 yards and it is still only waist deep. It is very sandy and although there were fish in the sea it is far too murky for snorkeling. There were large jelly fish, not the small transparent ones but the gangly red ones with long tentacles that sting.

This trip can be done DIY rather than with P & O and if there are 4 in a taxi then the cost would work out half of the P&O charge.

Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque; This mosque is a great way for tourists in Oman to experience some of the hospitality that you hear so many people talk about. It is a beautiful Islamic architectural style. The hand woven prayer carpet which covers the entire floor is a sight to behold and do is the 14 meters tall chandelier. The staff and guides are very friendly and helpful. Please ensure you wear proper attire...full sleeve shirts and pants and women in addition should cover their head.

Bait Al Zubair; A great museum. Interesting look at the Oman culture in the past. Great artifacts and a wonderful model village. Nice gift shop also. Also close to Sultan Qaboos Muttrah palace.

Souk; there are lots of narrow paths with lots of people selling things. It is not far from where the ship berths, a walk should take you no more than 10 mins from the port gates. Then a gentle stroll along the promenade.

Salalah



Salalah is the capital city of southern Oman's Dhofar province. It's known for its banana plantations, Arabian Sea beaches and waters teeming with sea life.

Your cruise ship will dock in an Industrial port. This is about 15 mins away from the city by taxi or coach.

Suggestions

Sumhuram Old City; The ancient city was built in 300 BC. The ruins themselves are interesting and the view of the ocean and river is breath-taking.

Taqah Castle; Definitely worth a visit. Make sure you go to the castle adjacent to the parking lot and the look-out structure above. The stairs are a little tough to climb but worth a trek up there to see the views. The staff are very hospitable and the facilities clean.

Museum Salalah; The museum is right beside the Frankincense trail city. It has relics from 700 ad and the ship building industry and Oman's sailors. It is small and will take you about an hour to see all the exhibits.

About 18 miles west of Salalah port are the high cliffs of Manreef Caves. These overlook the white sandy Mughsail Beach where camels often graze among the dunes. There are some giant blowholes in the cave rocks, though the rougher the sea the better your chance of catching a waterspout.

The Frankincense Souk near Al Bahri Beach is THE place to go to haggle for bargains.

Cruise Destinations

Excursion

"Introduction to Salalah", a visit to Mughsail beach and then a short drive to the Manreef Caves, onto the Sultan's palace and then a visit to the Al Balid museum. Finally the Frankincense Souk.

JORDAN

Aqaba



The Jordanian town of Aqaba nestles at the top of the Gulf of Aqaba which leads off the Red Sea. Boasting some excellent sandy beaches and one of the world's best-preserved coral reefs, this is a popular resort with divers.

But the main attraction of this area is the magnificent fortress city of Petra, buried by sand for more than 2,000 years until it was discovered in the desert near Aqaba in the 19th century and excavated in the 1950s.

Suggestions

The must do excursion is Petra. Originally built by Bedouin, the 'rose red' city of Petra is a genuine wonder of the world. Your 2 hour journey by bus and the landscape on route is incredible, through the Arabian Desert. So, desolate and formidable. You make a dramatic entrance by walking through the Siq (gorge) up to the imposing Treasury with its exquisite façade. The walk into Petra to the treasury is a mile long gentle slope down a rough sand/ shingle pathway which narrowed to only ten feet wide. Further on are temples, tombs and a huge theatre. It is a long and tiring day but everyone who has done this excursion says it is worth the effort.

Elsewhere, visit Wadi Rum, a vast silent landscape of sandstone mountains, desert and ancient bedrocks. Yes, a very early start, about 7:30am, and three and half hours on a bus, but worth every minute.

Aqaba Castle; Located in a very good area in Aqaba, 2 Jordanian Dinnar for the Entrance fee , Good information from the staff

Berenice Beach Club; It's a private beach club so you need to pay to get in but the beach and pools are very clean. The snorkelling area is right on the shore and really great from the beautiful jetty.

QATAR

Doha



Doha, capital of the peninsular Persian Gulf country Qatar, is a modern city on Doha Bay. Ringing its downtown waterfront are numerous parks and the Corniche Promenade.

It's rare to see a great city in the making these days, but here's your chance. Whether it's the stunning and constantly changing skyline or the massive investment the Qatari authorities are making in landmark cultural icons, this is a city oozing confidence and style, as at ease in its modern shopping malls as in its traditional souqs.

Suggestions

Souq Waqif; If you venture into the nooks and crannies of Souq Waqif you will be delighted by the fascinating vendors displaying old relics and artefacts of a bygone era. Worth the visit and to roam around. Good view and love the classic design of buildings. You definitely will never get bored with this place.

Cruise Destinations

The Corniche; Corniche is one of the most visited places in Qatar as it boasts the Doha Skyline, Skyscrapers and Dhow boats which is a traditional boat used by Qatar Pearl divers. During the night time they light it up with colourful LEDs.

Museum of Islamic Art; Interesting exhibits and a beautiful location for photos across Doha and the Corniche.

EGYPT

Port Said



Port Said is a coastal Egyptian city located on the shores at the northern end of the Suez Canal, on the Mediterranean Sea and is at the entrance of the Suez Canal.

It is considered to be the third most important city in Egypt, after Cairo, the capital, and Alexandria.

Suggestions

The Old Lighthouse of Port Said is considered among the most important monuments in the city with an important historical significance because it was the first building to be constructed with concrete iron and cement in the whole world.

The Base of the Statue of De Lesseps is located at the end of the Palestine Road at the end of the famous De Lesseps aisle in Port Said. The statue was created in 1899 and it is recorded as one of the monuments of Port Said in the records of the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities.

However most people do trips from here to see the pyramids. If this is on your list it is suggested, for safety reasons, to do an official one and not try and DIY.

Port Soqna



This port is in the Gulf of Suez. It is a working port and there is nothing of great beauty here, for this port you must take an excursion.

There are trips to Cairo/Giza/The Pyramids/The Sphinx from here. Cairo is about 2 hours away.

Safaga



This port is in the Red Sea. If Port Soqna was no beauty, Safaga is a horror of a port. The berth is alongside the Aluminium Company of Egypt depot/mill. So, plenty of white dust blowing about, sunbathing on deck is not the best.

From here it is Luxor and the Valley of the Kings, Temple at Luxor and the Temple at Karnak. If you are into Egyptian history then this is the place. Brilliant

Suggestions

So, the Valley of the Kings, Luxor and Karnak. This is over 3 hours away. But, if you have never visited any of the temples or tombs of Egypt then it is worth the trip,

A trip to Hurghada for its beaches and shops. A taxi should cost about \$40 each way.

Hurghada



Hurghada is a beach resort town stretching some 40km along Egypt's Red Sea coast. It's renowned for scuba diving, and has numerous dive shops and schools in its modern Sekalla district. There are many restaurants, bars and nightclubs, while the old town, El Dahar, is home to traditional Egyptian coffee shops and souks.

Stunning coral reefs and turquoise waters perfect for windsurfing have made Hurghada, on Egypt's Red Sea Coast, a busy resort town. Within easy reach of the stunning Giftun

Islands and the Eastern Arabian Desert,

Sharm El Sheikh



Sharm el-Sheikh is an Egyptian resort town between the desert of the Sinai Peninsula and the Red Sea. It's known for its sheltered sandy beaches, clear waters and coral reefs.

This is a great beach destination The Red Sea's warm water is great for swimming, and there are miles of great beaches in Sharm El Sheikh for working on your tan, but if you're a diver, look no further. We're talking enormous schools of fish and tons of excellent dive sites.

Suggestions

King Tut Museum; A fantastic museum hidden in the bottom of a shopping centre with no signage or directions. It is a breath-taking place where you can admire the beauty of ancient Egyptian art (the replicas are very well done!), and where you can discover very surprising facts about ancient Egyptian rituals, lifestyle etc.

But really this port is all about, beaches & snorkelling.

Suez Canal



The Suez Canal is an artificial sea-level waterway in Egypt, connecting the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea through the Isthmus of Suez.

Some Facts

1. Its origins date back to ancient Egypt.
2. Napoleon Bonaparte considered building it.
3. The British government was strongly opposed to its construction.
4. It was built using a combination of forced peasant labor and state-of-the-art machinery.
5. Its creator later tried—and failed—to build the Panama Canal.
6. A fleet of ships was once stranded in the canal for more than eight years.

SOUTH AMERICA & SOUTH ATLANTIC

ARGENTINA

Buenos Aires



Buenos Aires is Argentina's big, cosmopolitan capital city. Its centre is the Plaza de Mayo, lined with stately 19th-century buildings including Casa Rosada, the iconic, balconied presidential palace.

The birthplace of the tango is, like the dance itself, captivating, seductive and bustling with excited energy. Atmospheric old neighbourhoods are rife with romantic restaurants and thumping nightlife, and Buenos Aires' European heritage is evident in its architecture, boulevards

and parks.

Suggestions

Free guided walking tours; follow the link and find out where they start on your day of visit. These guided walking tours are free and do not require pre-registration. Please note that tours will be cancelled in the event of rain. <https://turismo.buenosaires.gob.ar/en/recorrido/free-guided-walking-tours>

Recoleta Cemetery; Who is who in Argentine Society and history is buried here. Unless you read up I recommend on it take a guide who stand at the entry and who will walk you around and take you to the highlights.

Palacio Barolo; A Great Great building inspired by La Divina Comedia of Dante. Go up from hell to Paradise. At the top, an extraordinary view of the city.

Avenida 9 De Julio; this is such a busy and bustling avenue but you know you are in Buenos Aires when you are here. The network of busy traffic and people is so extensive, but it is fascinating walking along. Venturing into the many side streets and back again. The Obelisk is the icing on the cake and this is a must visit in Buenos Aires.

Plaza de Mayo; The city's main square, Plaza de Mayo is flanked by the Cabildo and the Casa Rosada, past and present government headquarters. The square also has a long history of being the main stage for major political events in Buenos Aires history.

The Pink House; Argentina's current seat of government, The Pink House (or 'La Casa Rosada') sits on Plaza de Mayo, directly across from the former Spanish seat of government, the Cabildo. The building is marvellous to behold from the outside, and even more interesting on a guided tour of the interior — which will even take you to the famed 'Evita balcony.'

Puerto Madryn



Puerto Madryn is an Argentine city on the coast of northern Patagonia. Its sandy beaches and restaurant-lined promenade face Golfo Nuevo bay, where southern right whales breed from May to December.

Puerto Madryn is protected by the Golfo Nuevo, which is formed by Península Valdés and Punta Ninfas, and is one of the most sheltered places on the Patagonian coast. With five kilometres of beaches bordering the city, Puerto Madryn is the gateway to many other attractions in Argentina. Top

among them is Valdes Peninsula Nature Reserve, a UNESCO heritage site since 1999.

Suggestions

Punta Tombo; An unique opportunity to see the penguins, and not just a few... there is a lot of them! In this place you can see how this beautiful animals behave in their natural environment.

Oceanographic Museum; Free entry and a brisk walk from the main streets. There are no captions on the photos to show what we are seeing in the actual collection frames. But worth a visit if you are looking for something to do.

Ushuaia



Ushuaia is a resort town in Argentina. It's located on the Tierra del Fuego archipelago, the southernmost tip of South America, nicknamed the "End of the World." The world's southernmost city is located on the Beagle Channel, between the Martial Range and the end of the world. It is a key access point to skiing at Cerro Castor and Glacier Martial, wildlife adventures with penguins and orcas in the Beagle Channel, and Tierra del Fuego National Park. Of course, it's also the port of call nearest Antarctica, and a unique destination for kayaking, sailing or having a drink in a warm

hotel bar.

Here the Andes meet the southern ocean in a sharp skid, making way for the city before reaching a sea of lapping currents.

Suggestions

Canal Beagle; It is a beautiful place to visit. The people are friendly and hospitable. The Tierra Del Fuego National Park is a must to see. Take a jacket! It's cool even in the summer. If you are looking for penguins then they are here from November to April.

Bahia Lapataia; Awesome place! Lovely views! It is a really nice national park! It even has a good restaurant. It's a great view for photo shooting.

Galeria Tematica Historia Fueguina; This museum gives an interesting view of the history of Tierra del Fuego. Well worth the modest admission fee. here is a self-guided audio tour (in multiple languages) and the entire exhibit is very interesting.

BRAZIL

The Amazon



Pack, binoculars and if you can afford it a long telephoto lens for the wildlife. Some places hire these out and it is worth finding out costs.

At the beginning in all honesty there isn't a lot to see, in terms of individual sights, just water, trees and sky. However, there is the vast expanse of muddy brown water, with a tree edge. Nevertheless, it is very hot and calm.

Pass your time, quietly, simply sitting on the balcony or on deck with cameras and binoculars, absorbing the atmosphere and the sights, using your binoculars to get a clearer view of the trees on the bank. The vista is amazingly flat, the huge expanse of water and then the line of trees on the horizon, of almost uniform height, with just the odd one or two much taller and reaching for the sky. No hills, nothing to see beyond the trees. The river contains a lot of flotsam, which will sweep past you quickly, little rafts of green heading off to start their own new island!

You should pause at Santana, which is the pilot station just outside the city of Macapa. As well as the pilots, other assorted officials, immigration, customs and the like will join you.

Alter do Chão, Pará



Alter do Chão, is 33km west of Santarém and is best known for its Ilha do Amor (Island of Love), a picturesque island ringed by a white sand beach directly in front of town. The island is especially striking when the water is low (August to December) and beach restaurants and cool calm water make it a great place to chill out. In high water, the island is much smaller and sometimes completely submerged.

But Alter do Chão is much more than a beach town. The lagoon it fronts (Lago Verde) is home to myriad animals and can be explored by canoe or stand-up paddle. It's also the departure point for terrific boat tours to nearby forest reserves and isolated communities, and boasts one of the best indigenous art stores in the Amazon region.

Great unpretentious Tapajos River Beach resort town without the annoying five, four and three-star hotels and their often snotty patrons. And everything is within walking distance.

Suggestions

Alter do Chao Beach; The beach is very nice and pleasant. Bring your sun screen. It is a very earthy feel and not at all like the Bahamas or Caribbean but worth the trip.

Araribah; The Araribah opened in 1999 and has the most complete indigenous art in the Amazon. The quality is very good but the prices are a little on the high side.

Icoaraci, for Belem (Brazil)



Belém, capital of the state of Pará, is a port city and gateway to Brazil's lower Amazon region.

Belém is a surprisingly rewarding city, with streets and parks shaded by mango trees, and a number of fascinating museums and heady restaurant-bars. From Belém you can take overnight trips to Algodual and Ilha de Marajó, both appealing coastal destinations, or cut southward to Tocantins state. And of course, it's a logical launchpad for journeys further up the Amazon River

Suggestions

Mangal das Garcas; The park is great for a stroll, you feel in the middle of the jungle. There are birds and plants of many species and you can see them freely around. There is an observation tower.

Goeldi Museum & Park; This is a huge park in the middle of the city, it is like a piece of a forest! They have a museum that is quite ok, and birds, monkeys roaming free in the park. It's well taken care off and you can see families with young children coming here to enjoy a bit of nature.

Boca Da Valeria



You will able to clearly see the village from your cruise ship. The only way into the village is by your ship's tender which will take you a few yards up the Valeria River as the cruise ship will anchor in the Amazon River.

You will be greeted by dozens of kids all with their hands out. Don't be deceived though, these kids are very savvy and some are very good at pick pocketing.

You walk through the village and there is a church, bar and school house plus a few homes. There are two portable toilets for the visitors and then there are handmade crafts which many of the inhabitants bring to the area. The people don't mind having their picture taken however it must be followed by a US\$1 contribution for each photo. Some of the kids had their pets with them and all of these pets were apparently wild from the jungle.

Suggestions

For those a little more adventurous there are small boat or canoe rides that one can take a few hundred yards up the river. You will be asked US\$20 a person, then US\$10 a person and finally US\$5 a person. The canoes may have about three or four inches of water in the bottom.

If you get the opportunity to visit this village by all means do so. Just be aware of your surroundings at all times.

Buzios



Armação dos Búzios (or Búzios) is a Brazilian resort set on an ocean peninsula east of Rio de Janeiro. It's known as an upscale vacation destination with numerous beaches.

A simple fishing village until the early '60s, when it was 'discovered' by Brigitte Bardot and her Brazilian boyfriend, it's now one of Brazil's most upscale and animated seaside resorts, littered with boutiques, fine restaurants, villas, bars and posh pousadas. The Mediterranean touch introduced by the Portuguese has not been lost - indeed, the narrow

cobblestone streets and picturesque waterfront contribute to Búzios' image as Brazil's St Tropez.

Suggestions

Orla Bardot Boardwalk; This walk way connects a multitude of shops and restaurants.

Brigitte Bardot Statue; I guess if you're in Buzios you shouldn't really pass on the opportunity to get a photo sitting on Brigitte Bardot's lap. Sadly only a statue but we can all dream.

Mirante de Joao Fernandes; A Place where you can contemplate all sides of the peninsula of Buzios. A place to take lots of pictures, buy souvenirs and see the amazing beauty of Buzios from the top.

City Tour Trolley Buzios; For forty dollars this tour takes you all over Buzios, the hills and valleys and the beautiful beaches. The open topped vehicle allows you to feel the breeze and breathe the sea air.

Fortaleza



Fortaleza is the capital of the north-eastern Brazilian state of Ceará. It's known for its beaches, which are punctuated by red cliffs, palm trees, dunes and lagoons.

Beaches are the top draw in this sunny, rapidly developing city. Stalls at the Mercado Central or Feirinha Beira Mar brim with local handicrafts, ranging from ceramics to lacework and leather goods. The Dutch-built Fortress of Nossa Senhora da Assunção in the city centre, constructed in 1649, marks the spot where Fortaleza originated.

Suggestions

Fortress of Nossa Senhora da Assunção; This fortress is where the History of Fortaleza started. The name means Fort of Our Lady of the Rising. The place is open for visits, but there is very little publicity about this fact. To visit the fortress, approach the soldier who stands guard in front of the main entrance; he will direct you to the main office, and the person in charge will explain briefly what can be seen and will authorize the visit.

Passeio Publico; This is a small park between the old fort that gave the name to Fortaleza and the old prison which is now a tourism and handicrafts centre.

Macapa (Cruise Past)



Macapá is a city in Brazil and the capital of Amapá state in the country's North Region. It is located on the northern channel of the Amazon River near its mouth on the Atlantic Ocean.

You should pause at Santana, which is the pilot station just outside the city of Macapa. As well as the pilots, other assorted officials, immigration, customs and the like will join you.

Manaus



Manaus, the capital of the state of Amazonas, on the banks of the Negro River in northern Brazil, is a major departure point for the surrounding Amazon Rainforest. East of the city, the dark Negro River runs side by side with the brown, muddy Solimões River in a phenomenon called the Meeting of the Waters, which converge to form the Amazon River.

Suggestions

If you're in Manaus then a mandatory attraction is where the two rivers meet. It is very interesting because you don't often see the encounter of two different rivers really close.

Theatre of the Amazonas: Wonderful architecture, well-maintained and restored. Free concerts are held regularly by the Manaus orchestra. You just join the queue outside of the opera house, enter and sit wherever you want. It starts about 7pm.

Museu da Amazonia (MUSA). For those who can't or don't want to spend a day or more in the forest the museum is an excellent way to see some primary forest in a short visit. An observation tower with platforms above and below the canopy allows different perspectives and the chance to see some local bird-life. A guided tour provides an opportunity to see butterflies, snakes, spiders, plants and trees. The museum is an hour from the centre of Manaus but considerably closer to the airport, no special clothing or equipment is required and 2-3 hours is more than enough time to see everything.

Parque Ecologico Januari. (January Ecological Park) is about one hour by boat from Manaus on the Rio Negro. The park gives you a taste of the flora and fauna of the Amazon. You will see giant lily pads, acai trees, monkeys, crocodiles, pink dolphins, and a variety of birds. Enjoy a boat ride through the flooded forest.

Parintins



Parintins is a municipality

Parintins is a very small island in the far east of the Amazonas state. It has lots of small shops and eateries. Over the years, there has also been some degree of commercialization. You can easily find internet cafes. The tallest building on the island is clearly the local cathedral.

The best thing to do during the day time is to walk around. Most of the visitors prefer to sit down, get drunk and prepare for the evening. Feel free to indulge in the local soup, called tacaca .. and drink the capetas and caipirinhas. Capeta is a cocktail made with guarana, scotch and cachaca. caipirinha is made with cachaca, sugar and lime. Both drinks are very tasty.

You can also walk around to the part of the island where they make the floats. You can also indulge in face-painting to display you loyalty to either side. Do not expect too many people to speak English, but everyone is very very friendly.

Every once in a while you will also come across random groups of people performing the boi-dance ... a kind of step dance with very simple movements you will get a hang of it in less than 20 minutes.... and its a cool feeling to do it with the locals.

Rio de Janeiro



Rio de Janeiro is a huge seaside city in Brazil, famed for its Copacabana and Ipanema beaches, 38m Christ the Redeemer statue atop Mount Corcovado and for Sugarloaf Mountain, a granite peak with cable cars to its summit.

The bustling city of Rio de Janeiro has been one of Brazil's most popular and frequented tourist destinations for decades. Its vibrant city centre is bursting with culture and pulsating with a deep sense of history and heritage. Rio, as it is commonly known, is the second largest city in Brazil and

the third largest metropolis in the whole of South America.

Suggestions

Christ the Redeemer; The visit to Christ the Redeemer is one which offers spectacular views across the city, the statue itself is an amazing work of art. It is very easy to get to. Be careful of the street hawkers who are waiting at the metro and bus stations offering trips to see this. You can buy tickets at the site itself for 60 real, which includes the train journey up the hill. There is a cafe up the top of the hill which offers refreshments. Free wifi at the ticket office and on top of the hill.

Sugarloaf Mountain; It's worth spending an afternoon taking in the 360 degree view of RDJ. Not to be missed as part of any trip to Rio. It is busy so be patient and enjoy what is on offer.

Copacabana Beach; Copacabana beach is great for relaxing. Getting physical, people watching or simply going for a walk. Food and drink kiosks nearby.

Mirante Dona Marta; Amazing view of the city, and also a very beautiful view of Christ the Redeemer. Definitely worth the stop if visiting the statue of Christ.

Cruise Destinations

Salvador



Salvador, the capital of Brazil's North Eastern state of Bahia, is known for its Portuguese colonial architecture, Afro-Brazilian culture and a tropical coastline.

Once the magnificent capital of Portugal's great New World colony, Salvador is the country's Afro-Brazilian jewel.

Suggestions

Ponta de Humaita; The point is excellent to view the bay from close. But there are no attractions nearby.

Barra Lighthouse; Really great views from the top. Some interesting history inside the museum.

Santo Antonio da Barra fort and Nautic Museum; It's in a wonderful old fort and lighthouse, very well restored. Exhibits of the naval history and battles and the slave trade. A lot of English signs and descriptions.

Basilica Cathedral; This church incorporates the distinctive characteristics of Brazilian colonial architecture of churches, very baroque features covered in gold leaf.

Santarem, Brazil



A cruise port that is 500 miles inland? Now, that does sound a bit odd. The old port itself is very interesting. It is enjoyable to just sit on your balcony watching the comings and goings.

Santarem is constructing a brand new cruise terminal. That will be fully equipped, wi-fi enabled and the rest.

Suggestions

Bumbodromo; The show is something else. As you enter the building, you are offered a caipriana, national drink. The show is a vibrant, very lively dance extravaganza, with more than 100 dancers in fabulous colourful costumes, dancing and prancing about the floor area. Definitely worth a visit.

Santos



Santos, a coastal city in southern Brazil's São Paulo state, is a major seaport stretching from the mainland to São Vicente Island. Santos is renowned for its tranquil beaches, where you'll find there aren't many waves, which makes them ideal for swimming and water sports such as sailing, windsurfing and jet skiing. Unlike other destinations, the five miles of coastline in Santos is made up of one long stretch of beach.

A very popular tourist attraction, the Port of Santos is the largest in Latin America, and one of the most modern ports in

Brazil.

Cruise Destinations

Suggestions

The Trams; The trams, or "bondes" in Portuguese, are one of the main attractions in Santos. They have evolved into one of the most popular ways for tourists to explore the historic centre of Santos. To make this experience even more interesting, there are charming elderly men who will tell you legends and stories about the area.

Beachfront Garden; Another of the main attractions in Santos is its enormous beachfront garden, which stretches for nearly three and a half miles, from Jose Menino to Punta de la Playa. Like a huge colorful carpet, the largest urban garden in the world has an extensive variety of species of plants, including daisies, coleus, and lilies.

Municipal Orchidarium; The Orchidarium is located on five acres of land and features 6,000 species of orchids in the gardens. This park is definitely one of the most beautiful in the city. It has about 800 animals from 100 different species, including reptiles, birds and mammals that live in an environment similar to the Atlantic Forest.

Municipal Aquarium; The Municipal Aquarium is one of Santos' main attractions. It has a huge salt water tank full of sand sharks, manta rays, groupers, and red snappers. They also have an Amazonian tank, with many species native to the rainforest, such as peacock bass, tambaqui, wolfish, arowanas and arapaima.

CHILE

Arica



Arica is a port city in northern Chile, known for its surfing beaches.

The pace of Arica is simply delightful. It's warm and sunny year-round, there's a cool pedestrian mall to flip-flop around come sunset and decent brown-sugar beaches are just a short walk from the town centre.

Suggestions

El Morro de Arica; A steep walk up to get to this great viewing point. You can get a good look over Arica, including the port and city center. There's a Jesus-statue and a small military museum.

Museo Arqueologico San Miguel de Azapa; If you are in Arica, this is a truly outstanding museum to visit. It hosts the Chinchorro mummies, oldest in the world?, and a world of excellently displayed archaeological items. It belongs to the Univ of Tarapaca and is maybe 20 minutes up the Azapa Valley,

Playa Chinchorro; Nice place to walk. You can find coffee and restaurants, D'Ominos is recommended for a Pizza and a beer.

Coquimbo



The rough-and-tumble port of Coquimbo next door to La Serena has been undergoing something of a revolution in recent years. Clinging to the rocky hills of Peninsula Coquimbo, the town was long written off as La Serena's ugly cousin, but it has blossomed.

Legend has it that pirates crossed the Strait of Magellan to Coquimbo's beaches to bury their treasure. But even if you don't find a pot of gold along Chile's northern coastline, you will discover a city with many jewels.

Sparkling along a stretch of idyllic white sand are the shallow waters of La Herradura Bay, a favourite beauty spot against the rocky backdrop of Coquimbo's hills.

Suggestions

For a lively mix of music, culture and food, it's worth a wander to the beautifully restored 19th-century Barrio Inglés (English Quarter), or to the fishing jetty for some fresh seafood.

Those with a head for heights can climb El Vigía hill to The Third Millennium Cross, a staggering monument which dominates the skyline. A surreal mix between a holy pilgrimage site and viewpoint, there's a museum (largely devoted to the late Pope John Paul II), praying rooms and an elevator ride to the top.

Cruz Del Tercer Milenio; This is a strange place, The cross itself is quite ugly but the views from up there are great. You can take a lift to the top where surprisingly the viewing gallery has busts of various popes. There's also a museum behind the chapel.

Plaza de Armas; This is a good place to start a stroll of La Serena's shopping district. It is a handsome, well maintained square with a modernist fountain in its centre and some decent architecture surrounding it. A nice place for a rest or a spot of people watching.

Puerto Montt



Puerto Montt is a port city in southern Chile's Lake District, known as a gateway to the Andes mountains and the Patagonian fjords.

It is not a big city, and when you arrive from the ship via tender, you might think you've been plunked down into a corner of Bavaria ... if it weren't for the signs in Spanish.

Suggestions

Volcano Osorno; this is a must see while visiting Puerto Varas. Stunning views. Be prepared for a bit of wind.

Catedral de Puerto Montt; A very unusual church built in the traditional style with wood. Huge wooden doors open into a peaceful and simple church. Quite different from the usual ornate catholic churches.

Seno de Reloncavi; The boat trip does not take too long and the views of the volcanos are amazing. Everything about the Chilean waterways are amazing and beautiful. The landscapes, mountains, and sea side among the most spectacular in the world.

Just walk around the town and take the scenic train to the high point above the town for the views.

Punta Arenas



Punta Arenas is a city near the tip of Chile's southernmost Patagonia region. Located on the Strait of Magellan, which connects the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, it's often used as base for excursions to the surrounding wilderness and Antarctica.

Suggestions

The Plaza Muñoz Gamero has a memorial to explorer Ferdinand Magellan, and the Museo Nao Victoria features a replica of one of his galleons.

Isla Magdalena y Marta; A special place as this small island hosts a colony of thousands of Magellan penguins and the visitor can walk among those friendly birds. However, it can be over crowded with tourists.

Park of the Strait of Magellan; The park itself is really nice and make sure you walk around the coastal path. The landscape is just amazing. The fort Bulnes has great historical significance and the guided tour should not be missed.

Costanera del Estrecho; There is a boardwalk along the harbour through most of town, which provides beautiful views of the water. You can rent bikes, sit and have a coffee from one of the street vendors or visit monuments such as the Costanera del Estrecho monument.

San Antonio



San Antonio is a Chilean city, commune and the capital of the San Antonio Province in the Valparaíso Region.

Unless you work for the port, San Antonio is not considered a tourist destination.

Suggestions

Just over 1hr 20 mins away is **Santiago**.

Santiago



Santiago, Chile's capital and largest city, sits in a valley surrounded by the snow-capped Andes and the Chilean Coast Range.

Santiago is one of those metropolitan joys where the more you look, the more you find.

Suggestions

Sky Costanera; The tower is part of a huge shopping complex. The view tower is impressive but costs over \$15 just to go up the elevator.

Cerro Santa Lucia; Very nice park, worth visiting for the views it offers all around the city. Some interesting monuments.

Santuario de la Inmaculada Concepcion; This is the top of a small mountain and it is incredibly beautiful. You can access by a trolley car that goes straight up the mountain or by chair lift from the opposite side. It is a beautiful peaceful place. The views of Santiago are wonderful.

Parque por la Paz Villa Grimaldi; This memorial park is a great opportunity to see some of Chile's history firsthand. The audio guide is available in English and is very good. It is a little bit outside of the city but a taxi there and back should cost about 6000 pesos from Las Condes. Entrance to the park and the audio guides are both free.

Valparaiso



Valparaíso is a port city on Chile's coast. It's known for its steep funiculars and colourful, cliff-top homes. Syncopated, dilapidated, colourful and poetic, Valparaíso is a wonderful mess.

Suggestions

Pablo Neruda's House; Beautiful views, and an interesting opportunity to get a glimpse inside Pablo Neruda's house. It gets very crowded and is somewhat overpriced. However, the audio tour is good.

Ascensor/Elevator Artillery; Go up or down the hills of Valparaiso in an old vintage cable car. It was very inexpensive to ride and you get a beautiful view from the top.

Nacional Maritime Museum; This museum is located at the top of the funicular (Ascensor Artillera) - come out of the funicular at the top and turn right and the entrance is up some steps between some market stalls.

Just over 1hr 30 mins away is Santiago.

Amelia Glacier (Cruise Past)



Located in southern Chile on the edge of the Sarmiento Channel, the Amalia Glacier, also known as Skue Glacier, is a tidewater glacier located within the massive Bernardo Higgins National Park, one of Chile's most impressive attractions. It is a retreating glacier and is receding at an incredibly fast past compared with other glaciers in the region. This glacier partially surrounds Reclus Volcano and erodes its northern flank.

Cape Horn (Cruise Past)



Cape Horn is a point on Hornos Island, in the Tierra del Fuego archipelago at the southernmost tip of South America. It was first navigated by Jakob Le Maire and Willem Schouten in 1616 and it was Schouten that named the point after his Dutch town of birth - Hoorn. The body of water that passes the point and rounds the island was notoriously treacherous for the ships of that era which were buffeted by storms and strong currents as they attempted to sail around the huge icebergs that blighted their path. But when gold was discovered in California in 1848 this route suddenly

became an immensely important passageway from the Atlantic to the Pacific Coast and so shipbuilders began to craft ships that were sturdier and more able to withstand the rigours of passage. But, once the Panama Canal opened in 1914, most captains chose this quicker, easier route through, which is why rounding Cape Horn today is regarded as one of the most special of seafaring experiences.

Beagle Channel (Cruise Past)



The channel owes its name to the British ship the Beagle, upon which Charles Darwin explored the area in the early 1800s. It's a 150 mile channel of water that cuts through South America's Tierra del Fuego archipelago of islands, separating the main island in the north from the collection of small islands in the south. Its mysterious grey waters, into which glaciers leisurely tumble, is presided over by a group of majestic mountains and provides a home to sea lions, the Peale's dolphin and Minke whales. Look to the skies and cliff-faces for spectacular birdlife including the Black-browed

albatross, the thick-set Giant petrel, Southern skuas, the South American tern and the primitive looking Cormorant. One thing is for sure, you should wrap up warm and head up on deck for some of the most memorable and magical sights you'll experience on your trip.

Canal Sarmiento (Cruise Past)



One of the main channels in Patagonia, the Sarmiento Channel runs in a north-south direction, starting at the Guía Narrows and finishing at the southern edge of Victoria Pass, where it joins the Smyth Channel.

The Kawesqar people have inhabited this region for more than 6,000 years, but the channel was named for a more recent arrival: the Spanish explorer Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa, who first navigated it between 1579 and 1580.

The Chilean mainland lies to the east, and the islands of Esperanza, Vancouver and Piazzzi flank the channel to the west. As elsewhere in the Chilean fjord region, the ragged coastline is cut with inlets set among snow-covered mountain ranges. In many places, massive glaciers run down to the sea. All kinds of marine animals, including Magellanic penguins, southern elephant seals, dolphins and orcas, can be seen along these shores.

Chilean Fjords (Cruise Past)



Regardless of the temperature you will be in awe of the sheer beauty and magnificence of the Chilean Fjords while scenic cruising to the Amalia Glacier.

Against a backdrop of spectacular peaks, the fjords and islands of the Chilean coast are home to dolphins, whales, seals, and Magellanic penguins. You will pass below walls of blue glaciers, skirt tiny islands thick with vegetation, and discover hidden lakes and waterfalls.

Glacier Alley (Cruise Past)



Sailing down the Beagle Channel in glacier alley and passing in front of these 5 glaciers (Holanda, Italia, Francia, Alemania, Romanche) is just so spectacular and definitely one of the highlights of our cruise.

The scenery is grandiose, peaceful and unique. Glacier alley is also of historical importance as it was described in details by Charles Darwing during his 5-year voyage on the HMS Beagle. Ushuaia bay is nice but to me glacier alley is really the most beautiful part of the Beagle Channel. All the glaciers are on the northern shore of the channel

Magellan Straits (Cruise Past)



The Strait of Magellan (often referred to as the Straits of Magellan or the Magellan Strait) is a channel at the southern tip of South America linking the Atlantic Ocean and Pacific Ocean. This navigable sea route separates the mainland from Tierra del Fuego and other islands south of the continent. Except for a few miles at its easternmost extremity in Argentina, it lies within Chilean territorial waters. The strait's major port is Punta Arenas on the Brunswick Peninsula.

The first European to navigate the strait was Ferdinand Magellan, a Portuguese maritime explorer sailing for Spain, who discovered the strait in 1520 during the first successful attempt at circumnavigating Earth.

The strait is approximately 600 kilometres (370 mi) long, and ranges from 3 to 35 kilometres (1.9 to 22 mi) at its narrowest and widest points, respectively.

PIO X Glacier (Cruise Past)



The Pio XI Glacier is the only glacier in the world that is continuing to grow and currently has a surface area of 786 square miles.

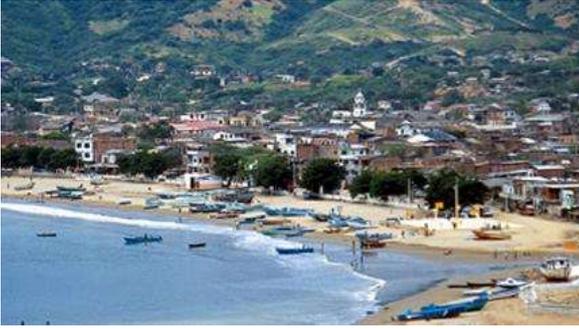
Located in Bernardo O' Higgins National Park, Pio XI Glacier is another must-see place in the region.

Pio XI is as big as Santiago, with a surface of 1265 square kilometres, which grows 50 meters in height, length and density every day. This is a unique quality, all the other glaciers in Patagonia and in most areas of the world are losing extension, whereas Pio XI keeps growing every day.

Pio XI Glacier, the biggest one in South America, offers a unique view of the landscape, whether you chose to see it from a boat or standing on it, if weather conditions permit it. The biggest glacier in South America.

ECUADOR

Manta



Manta is a thriving port town, renowned (rather unglamorously) for deep sea fishing and canning tuna.

But there is not much in Ecuador's fifth largest city except its endless stretches of golden, sandy beaches.

Suggestions

Museo del Banco Central; This is a newish museum (2009) which focusses on the Pre-Columbian culture and history.

Playa Santa Marianita; Small hidden beach for kids and family. Awesome food and things to do. Overall, a great place to stay the entire day and chill.

Playa San Lorenzo; It's a great stop for families, safe surroundings. Beach is never crowded there are several lunch options.

PERU

Callao



El Callao is the chief seaport of Peru. This is the vital route for trade both into and out of Peru. It has mansions with pretty balconies, museums, churches and the fortress of King Felipe, which survived wars and pirate attacks. As well as tradition, in Callao you can enjoy nature on the islands of Palomino and San Lorenzo, in the Humedales de Ventanilla (wetlands) or on the pebble beaches.

This Area of Lima has become quite dangerous if you do not know where to go or get lost. It is suggested that you do go with a good guide or a person from that area. There is no need to put yourself in danger.

Suggestions

Real Felipe Fortress; Built in 1747 from a design by Frenchman Luis Godín, it was one of the most important forts in the Americas, and played a key role in the colony by protecting the capital from pirate and corsair attacks. Later, during the battle of 2 May 1866, it became the country's main line of defence during the armed conflict with Spain. Visiting Hours : Mon - Sun 9.00 am - 4.00 pm.

Mother Church, or Callao Cathedral; One of the port's oldest temples. Built in 1833 by Antonio Dañino, a prosperous merchant, and renovated in 1876. Called the Church of Saint Simon and Saint Judas of Callao, it was said to house the remains of both saints.

Independence Plaza; A plaza with well-maintained gardens, located in front of the entrance to Royal Felipe Fortress. One notable attraction is a large ornamental bronze fountain with mythological and commerce-themed figures.

However, Callao is your landing point for the capital of Peru, Lima - originally known as the 'City of the Kings'. About 12 km (7 miles) away.

Lima



Lima, the capital of Peru, lies on the country's arid Pacific coast. Lima, founded by Francisco Pizarro in 1535, is a fascinating city and a treasure trove of history. Explore ancient Incan archaeological sites, or stroll through the elegant cathedrals and opulent palaces dating from Spanish colonial times. Downtown Lima is crowded, but you'll enjoy exploring the city's neighbourhoods—especially the beachfront areas, which have great shopping and dining and fabulous hotels.

After Cairo, this sprawling metropolis is the second-driest world capital, rising above a long coastline of crumbling cliffs.

Suggestions

Miraflores Boardwalk; Thoroughly recommend the clifftop parks. It's a hive of activity, fun, clean and welcoming. Great scenic views of the ocean too.

Iglesia y Convento de San Francisco; Interesting old cathedral with wonderful artwork. No photography is allowed. You can also visit the catacombs under the main altar.

Centro Historico de Lima; Walk around the area and enjoy all the small little churches, they are amazing! They also offer tours if you have the time.

Huaca Pucllana; Pre-Incan, Lima culture Huaca Pucllana displays tens of thousands of square meters of archaeological exploration revealing a huge pyramid built of bricks (adobes), part of it still covered by sand and dust. Guided tours take visitors around the site.

Paracas



Paracas is the capital of the Paracas District in the Ica Region in Peru. A small port town catering to tourism, Paracas serves as the jumping point for tours to Islas Ballestas and to Paracas National Reservation.

The small port town of Paracas is the gateway to a number of Peru's most famous natural wonders and nature reserves.

Suggestions

The Chandelier; This geoglyph is miles away from the Nazca lines and it's believed to have served as beacon as it points towards them in a flight path. On a desert hillside facing the ocean, its unbelievable how it has survived thousands of years of erosion in a zone well known for its "paracas" (desert storms)

Islas Ballestas; These islands are the must see attraction in Paracas. Accesible by boat, it is wonderful to see thousands of sea lions, dolphins and, if you are lucky, a penguin or two. Just a short boat ride from shore with different operators.

Paracas History Museum; Known for its collection of elongated skulls - which are gruesomely mesmerizing, but also has a small exhibits of materials, pottery and weapons. It is small so will only take 10-20 mins to view everything and is very cheap to get in at S/3.00pp.

Pisco



Pisco is a port city on Peru's southern coast, known for the grape brandy of the same name. It's a gateway to the uninhabited Ballestas Islands, home to scores of sea lions, pelicans, Peruvian boobies and Humboldt penguins.

Crushed by a 2007 earthquake that destroyed its infrastructure but not its spirit, Pisco is a town on the rebound, reinventing itself almost daily. Irrespective of the substantial damage, the town remains open for business, promoting itself along with nearby beach resort of El Chaco

(Paracas), as a base for forays to the Paracas Reserve and Islas Ballestas, although El Chaco trumps it in terms of location and choice of facilities.

Suggestions

Plaza de Armas; This is a pretty main square with grass, trees and an impressive statue of *General San Martin* at its centre. However, this square was also the scene of a major tragedy in August 2007 when a severe earthquake struck Pisco and the old adobe Cathedral of San Clemente, which fronted the square, collapsed.

Band of Holes; These holes are one of the many mysteries of Peru. If you are into archaeology or ancient civilizations this sight should be on your list. It probably could be combined with a tour of Tambo Colorado.

Paracas National Reserve; This is a huge park and mainly desert, sand and beach/cliffs. There are set points-fossil walks, lookout over an old fallen down arch, black beach. But, this is an area that comes to life with a guide to give history of the land and peoples.

Pisco Beach; The beach to the right of the old pier, as you face the sea, it is really a peaceful and great place to watch all the birds that are flying in to rest on the pier. There are also flamingos in the marshes that run along the back of the beach.

FRENCH GUYANA

Devil's Island (or Cayenne)



This is a sail past best viewed from up on top. It takes about an hour, either stationary or going very slowly, to have a look at the 3 islands, Isle Royale, Isle Ste Joseph and Isle de Diable.

Devil's Island and associated prisons eventually became one of the most infamous prison systems in history.

Îles du Salut



The Îles du Salut are a group of small islands of volcanic origin about 11 kilometres the coast of French Guiana,

Known in English as the Salvation Islands, these were anything but that for prisoners sent here from the French mainland by Emperor Napoleon III and subsequent French governments, Devil's Island.

Suggestions

The old director's house has an interesting English-language history display; free, two-hour guided tours of Île Royale (usually in French) begin here. Surprisingly abundant wildlife includes green-winged Ara macaws, agoutis, capuchin monkeys and sea turtles. Carry a swimsuit and towel to take advantage of the white-sand beach and shallow swimming holes on St Joseph.

URUGUAY

Montevideo



Montevideo, is a major city along Montevideo Bay. It revolves around the Plaza de la Independencia, once home to a Spanish citadel.

The nation's capital and home to nearly half of Uruguay's population; Montevideo is a vibrant, eclectic place with a rich cultural life. Stretching 20km from east to west, the city wears many faces, from its industrial port to the exclusive beachside suburb of Carrasco near the airport.

Suggestions

Rambla de Montevideo; The "Rambla" is the coastal highway all along the coast of Montevideo. From the Old City for miles passing a beautiful residential neighborhood called Carrasco.

Theatre Solis; A very nice, classic, building, near the "Old City" ("Ciudad Vieja"), just in front of the large "Independence Square" ("Plaza Independencia"). It was originally just an opera house, but now it was restored, and all kind of events are shown.

Cruise Destinations

Museum Andes 1972; This museum is about the plane crash in 1972 which you see in the movie *Alive*. There is a good 15 min video (in Spanish with English subtitles) telling the story, and that is supplemented with a lot of artefacts, pictures, maps and signs.

There is a HOHO bus, just opposite the dock and there are private minibuses on the dock doing tours for about \$20 each which are good value.

There's a good little market across the road from the dock with lots of food/drink outlets. Be sure to go inside the little food market areas where they cook the food over massive fires - an amazing thing to watch and the food is great.

FALKLANDS

Port Stanley



Stanley, is the capital of the Falklands, is the only town in the archipelago of 778 islands and is home to almost 75 percent of the total population of 2,932 people. Its human population is greatly outnumbered by about one million penguins and half a million sheep.

It is one long street overlooking the bay.

This is a Tender port.

Suggestions

The Historic Dockyard Museum has galleries devoted to maritime exploration, social and natural history, the 1982 Falklands War and Antarctic heritage. By the waterfront, a whalebone arch stands near the entrance of Christ Church Cathedral, which was built in the late 1800s. Migratory Magellanic penguins gather at nearby Gypsy Cove.

A great gift shop is the Harbour Gifts which does all things Falklands, all good quality stuff. Then you have the Waterfront Kitchen for refreshments.

There are private mini bus tours on the dock which are WAY cheaper than the ship's tours.

Try a private tour with Patrick Watts to Volunteer Point to see King Penguins, Gentoo Penguins and Magellanic Penguins. The drive takes around 2 ½ hours with approx. 1 ½ hours off road. They travel in groups of about 6 so that if one gets stuck, someone else can tow them out. The drive itself is exciting and quite an experience.

Gypsy Cove is a 15 min drive away and you can walk on your own to see the penguins on the beach below. The last bus back is 2pm.

Be sure to walk down to the war memorial at the end of the street, very moving.

Most people opt for an excursion, either ships or private.

CAPE VERDE ISLANDS

Santiago



Praia is the capital city of Cape Verde, which is off the coast of West Africa. The city is on the southern coast of Santiago Island.

The old town centre, called the "Plateau" by locals, is on a raised area overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. Around the bay, beaches include Quebra Canela and Praínha, both near the Praínha neighbourhood. Shops and restaurants cluster in the Achada de Santo António quarter.

Suggestions

Farol de D. Maria Pia; This site offers spectacular views of the coast line. It is well worth the short walk out to this ancient lighthouse. George, the sole resident, is very happy to show you around and take you up to the light - and he's full of stories about its history.

Praca Alexandre Albuquerque; It is the main square of the Plateau, surrounded by the most important buildings. Interesting to visit and discover the history of Cape Verde.

Monumento de Diogo Gomes; Not much to look at but you get great views of the city and the park below. It is free to walk around and is next to the presidential palace. This area has a lot of soldiers and police so it is extremely safe. The houses around the area are beautifully painted and it is a nice place to take pictures.

Beaches

Quebra Canela Beach; Typical "city beach", generally quite crowded, not "enchanting". The sea is enjoyable. Bars and shops really close-by.

Praínha Beach; there are no really nice beaches in Praia but this one is recommended. It has a nice view to the light house.

St. Vincente



Life on the very dry island of St Vicente mainly happens in the city of Mindelo, where more than 80% of the approximately 80,000 island residents live.

In terms of its landscape, São Vicente is dominated by the mighty Monte Verde peak (750 metres). Together with the two other mountain ranges (the Madeiral and Fateixa), it defines the appearance of the island. From here, you have a good view of the surrounding countryside and the city of Mindelo. On clear days, you can even see Santo Antão and

beyond to the uninhabited islands of Santa Lucia, Branca and Raso. However, unlike the promise of its name, the mountain is not green. It consists of reddish-brown scree.

Overall, I could not find much to do and see on the island.

Beaches

A beautiful, wind-protected bathing beach (the only one on the island that is safe for children) is situated in the northeast of the island, near the little town of Baía das Gatas. A music festival also takes place here every year in August.

Cruise Destinations

Praia do Norte and de Praia Grande, both of which are very beautiful beaches, are located further to the south. But they are not suitable for swimming due to the heavy surf. Only an area of beach in the southeast of Praia do Norte, Praia da Ceilada/Calhau, offers better swimming conditions.

INDIAN OCEAN

MALDIVES

Male



Malé is the densely populated capital of the Maldives, an island nation in the Indian Ocean. It's known for its historic mosques and colourful skyscrapers.

The pint-sized Maldivian capital is the throbbing, mercantile heart of the nation, a densely crowded and extraordinary place, notable mainly for its stark contrast to the laid-back pace of island life elsewhere in the country.

Suggestions

Mulee Aage; Many people mix up the president's residence with the square beside the president's jetty. Mulee Aage is the president's residence. Jumhooree Maidhaan (Republic Square) is the square with the big flag-pole.

However, most people who have visited here say to get a boat tour/taxi to one of the better islands.

Uligamu



Uligan or Uligamu is one of the inhabited islands of Haa Alif Atoll and geographically part of the Ihavandhippolhu Atoll in the Maldives.

Famous as the home to some stunning beaches, the Maldives give a taste of paradise that you'll want to remember for a lifetime. The quiet, tranquil waters call for you to explore life under the sea, including coral reefs and tropical fish. The ideal location to relax.

Uligamu Island is a peaceful and serene paradise island in the Maldives. Here you can unwind and relax on pristine, sandy beaches, or explore the island's settlement, where the locals will try to sell you a range of unique and hand-made souvenirs. The waters surrounding the island are full of marine life and sunsets are especially worth watching.

Suggestions

This is an island to get off and chill.

MADAGASCAR

Tulear



Tulear, also known as Toliara or Toliary, is a town with a seaport on the southwest coast of Madagascar.

There are two good reasons to visit Toliara: the rich marine life with good snorkelling and diving and the remarkable spiny forest and its accompanying fauna.

Suggestions

Arboretum d'Antsokay; This is the one must-see attraction in Tuléar. Essentially a 400,000-sq-metre distillation of the entire spiny forest in one place, it's a fantastic collection of 900 plant species. Established by a Swiss botanist and conservationist in 1980, it's also a model for how much-larger parks should be run. There's a classy interpretation centre, a small museum, shop, self-guided tours in English, a stylish restaurant

Honko Community Mangrove Reserve; An interesting place where you can see many unusually plants and animals. The local guide will explain all details and answer your questions.

MAURITIUS

Port Louis



Port Louis is the capital city of Mauritius. Sandwiched between the Indian Ocean and a mountain backdrop, Port Louis blends Mauritius modernity and tradition. Buzzing with activity during the day, the city is full of cultural and historical treasures that should not be missed. Beyond the central market, which is a focal point for those who want to feel close to the soul of Mauritius, are many historic sites including the Champ de Mars - the oldest race course in the southern hemisphere.

The Caudan Waterfront entices shoppers with fashion, local crafts and live entertainment. Domaine les Pailles, with its 18th-century ox-driven sugar mill and colonial architecture, houses a new casino. Seek out the capital city's vast Bazaar, built in 1828, for spices, souvenirs and a lunch of fried noodles. For great views, hike the pedestrians-only road up Signal Mountain.

Suggestions

Le Caudan Waterfront; The Caudan Waterfront is popular with locals as well as tourists, being situated right in the Capital city of Port Louis. The shops offer interesting products at good prices. Cafes and restaurants also offer a selection of Mauritian cuisine. The shopping complex houses a Craft Market, which offers a very wide variety of local handicrafts at affordable prices.

Citadel Fort Adelaide; There's not a lot to see at the fort itself, but the views are spectacular, which emphasises why the fort was built on this hill over Port Louis.

Le Jardin de Pamplemousse; The Botanical garden has rare trees of which plenty have medicinal properties. There are old tortoises. A deer park where children love to feed the animals.

Praslin Island



With stunning white sand beaches and lush tropical forests covering the hills, Praslin is a delight.

Despite being the second biggest island in the Seychelles it has fraction of the population, inhabited by a mere 6,500 people. It is sleepy, laid back and far less developed than neighbouring Mahe, yet still large enough to explore when you tire of your nearest beach.

The beaches on Praslin stand out, with famous names like Anse Lazio and Anse Geogette frequently making top ten lists of best beaches and most beautiful destinations worldwide, and with good reason. Cote D'Or is another great draw too. But Praslin is also the only island where you can enjoy an 18 hole round of golf on a championship course, or discover the amazing Coco De Mer, an exotic plant that lead to the belief the Seychelles were the true Garden of Eden.

Taxis in Seychelles are really expensive.

Suggestions

This is a relax and chill on the beach location.

REUNION

Pointe des Galets



The Pointe des Galets is a cape in the north-west of the island of Réunion, heading on the Indian Ocean. It is now entirely occupied by the town centre of Le Port, Réunion.

With its active volcano, Reunion is often likened to Hawaii.

There should be a shuttle from the terminal to the port gates where there will be lots of taxis vying for your attention.

Suggestions

St. Denis; the island's French colonial capital, is located on the island's northernmost tip. It is home to the pretty State Gardens, Natural History Museum, and many historical Creole buildings.

Piton de la Fournaise; features a striking volcano cone that is layered with black lava. This still active "Furnace Peak" volcano is over one million years old, and closely monitored for activity.

St Gilles des Bains ; is a popular resort, thanks to its 15-mile stretch of lagoon, and beautiful golden sand - a rarity on an island where most of the sand is of the black volcanic variety.

Handicrafts Market the bustling Handicrafts Market in St. Denis, is nestled among the attractive Creole houses along the Rue de Paris, and sells wonderful spices, scents, baskets, wooden handicrafts and embroidery.

Piton des Neiges; (snow peak), is just over 10,000-feet high - one of the highest points in the Indian Ocean. The volcano has been inactive for 20,000 years, and is surrounded by three big crater valleys.

Bride's Veil Waterfalls and Salazie; This stunning waterfall, which is located in the lush Salazie region, near St Andre, gets its name from the way the water cascades down in glistening veils. A must-see for any visitor to Reunion.

SEYCHELLES

Port Victoria



Port of Victoria, is located in Seychelles, an archipelago in the Indian Ocean, northeast of Madagascar. It is located on Mahe island.

The town is about 30 mins away on foot. There will also be taxis available.

Suggestions

Seychelles National Botanical Gardens; A beautiful tropical area that contains the most beautiful vegetation of

Seychelles, a natural and fascinating habitat.

Mission Lodge Lookout; The view from here is really good. Nothing exceptional about the place, but you can go there for the view.

Morne Blanc; There is a bus up to the entrance of this mountain near the tea estate. The walk up the forested mountain is very enjoyable and the view from the summit it just fantastic with several coves and the beautiful blue Indian ocean visible from there. Be aware, the walk is pretty steep but 30-40 minutes are usually enough to make it to the top,

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Suggestions

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The island's main attraction is the UNESCO World Heritage Vallée de Mai, a first-class botanical sensation which attracts many visitors on a daily basis. A walk through the jungle-esque park leaves you with a taste of how the island's first visitors might have felt. Besides plants, rare birds such as the Raven Parrot call this reserve their home.

Silhouette, Cruise by



Twenty kilometres to the northwest of Mahé, the Seychelles' best known island, lies Silhouette Island, the third largest of the archipelago's granitic island.

Silhouette's only settlement is the village of La Passe, on the island's western coast. The island has well maintained trails, allowing visitors to explore beaches and some of the rainforest.

AFRICA

MOZAMBIQUE

Maputo



Maputo, capital of East Africa's Mozambique, is an Indian Ocean port with preserved Portuguese colonial architecture.

With its Mediterranean-style architecture, waterside setting and wide avenues lined with jacaranda and flame trees, Maputo is easily one of Africa's most attractive capitals. It is also the most developed place in Mozambique, with a wide selection of hotels and restaurants, well-stocked supermarkets, shady sidewalk cafes and a lively cultural scene.

The heart of the city is the bustling, low-lying baixa (old town), spreading out north and east from the port. A few kilometres away, the seaside Avenida Marginal is lined with new developments on its inland side, while on the sea side life moves at a more leisurely pace. Maputo is pricier than elsewhere in the country.

Suggestions

Maputo Central Train Station; The museum is awesome. The full history of the Mozambican railways and communications from Telex to the phone. You can wander around the station for free and there is no need to go into the museum. Which is closed on a Monday.

National Money Museum; This museum of money focuses on money and its origins, and has a vast collection of currency from all over the world. It is located in what appears to be a lovely, modern structure but is one of the oldest houses in Maputo.

Casa do Ferro (The Iron House); Set in the Jardim Botanica Tunduru in Maputo is this prefabricated steel house designed by Gustav Eiffel of the Eiffel Tower fame.

NAMIBIA

Walvis Bay



Walvis Bay is a city in Namibia and the name of the bay on which it lies. Walvis Bay is pleasant enough, particularly around the new waterfront development and along the esplanade.

The town proper is not so compact and has a far more relaxed feel to it.

Suggestions

Walvis Bay Waterfront; Worth stopping to see the flamingos and pelicans. Sunset is amazing. Very relaxing place.

Long Beach Leisure Park; The place is really beautiful and well organized and the staff there know customer service and have good professional etiquette too.

A unique experience is the adventurous 48 km drive to Sandwich Harbour, a freshwater lagoon surrounded by dunes, and a favourite amongst anglers and ornithologists. A four-wheel drive is a necessity.

SENEGAL

Dakar



Dakar is the capital of Senegal, in West Africa. It's an Atlantic port on the Cap-Vert peninsula. Its traditional Médina quarter is home to the Grande Mosquée, marked by a towering minaret.

Once a tiny settlement in the south of the Cap Vert peninsula, Dakar now spreads almost across its entire triangle, and keeps growing. Dakar stands as a multicultural, diverse city full of vibrant arts and traditions. Residents from various ethnic groups present assorted crafts, foods,

jewellery, fabrics and wood and metal goods at bustling markets such as Marche Sandaga or Marche HLM.

The city is home to museums and mosques, cliff walks and beaches, and makes a convenient jumping point for excursions to any of Senegal's national parks and nature reserves.

Suggestions

Cathedral du Souvenir Africain; This is an impressive cathedral, which exists in a country that is 95% Muslim. This fact alone merits a visit here. The architecture is sparse and clean but grandiose. The decor inside is sparse, almost puritanical. The main draw is the interesting fresco of the main cupola; the ascension of man to heaven.

Accrobaobab Adventure; Nice place to visit, especially with a group of friends. You will be provided an instructor during the whole time, so it is safe, and they are well instructed. It is not easy activity as it might seem. Baobabs are very high, so hopefully you are not afraid of height. Take your time and enjoy the activity.

African Arts Museum; This museum is a gem to find in the midst of Dakar. Open space that showcases the history and beautiful art of Senegal and other surrounding countries.

SOUTH AFRICA

If you are looking to experience a safari and see the wildlife then I would suggest lots of research or even a ships excursion.

Cape Town



Cape Town is a port city on South Africa's southwest coast, on a peninsula beneath the imposing Table Mountain. Slowly rotating cable cars climb to the mountain's flat top, from which there are sweeping views of the city, the busy harbor and boats heading for Robben Island in Table Bay. The notorious prison that once held Nelson Mandela is now a living museum.

Suggestions

Table Mountain National Park; Table Mountain Top is beautiful. The view of Cape Town is spectacular and unforgettable. Great place to take photo of the city.

Cape of Good Hope; Breathtaking journey. If you decide to do the short trail to the top (about 10 minutes), you have an amazing view of the ocean. Then think after thousands of Kilometres only Antarctica: really amazing!

Victoria & Alfred Waterfront; There plenty of restaurants here. They offer good food options. And also plenty of tourists visiting the area.

Durban



Durban, a coastal city in eastern South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal province, is known for its African, Indian and colonial influences.

Durban offers a lot more than beautiful, golden beaches. It is the centre of world-class sport and hosts major international events. It is a shopper's paradise with world class standard shopping malls and precincts, craft markets and street bazaars.

Suggestions

Durban Botanic Gardens; Beautiful setting with amazing plants and flowers that will calm your soul. Easy walkways so that even loss with accessibility issues can enjoy the time there.

Umgeni River Bird Park; this is a great place and amazing venue, it is bursting with colour, so many different birds too see.

Golden Mile; Whether it's a sunrise walk on the beach, midday stroll or evening sundowners... This is the place to experience Durban in all its splendour. The golden mile boasts family restaurants and a beautiful view.

Mossel Bay



Mossel Bay is a harbour town on the Garden Route in South Africa's Western Cape Province. It's known for the wide Santos Beach and the 19th-century Cape St. Blaize Lighthouse, which offers bay views.

Mossel Bay is located exactly half-way between Cape Town - the provincial capital of the Western Cape Province - and Port Elizabeth (both 400 km away). The broader area is known as the Garden Route. The Garden Route is known for its diversity in nature and mild climate. The coastal area is

mainly Fynbos (Riversdal - Mossel Bay), as well as foresty areas (George - Tsitsikamma) and in the northern section (Oudtshoorn) you will find a semi-desert climate and scenery.

Suggestions

Bartolomeu Dias Museum; Very interesting Museum with full sized clipper inside. The seashell room with various marine life is interesting , good place to pass sometime and learn about area.

Cape St Blaize Lighthouse; It's a must when you are in Mossel Bay. You only go there for the view. You will see the whole of Mossel Bay and it is Spectacular.

Diaz Express; The Diaz Express train ride from Hartenbos to Great Brak proved to be that 'out of the ordinary' experience. The views from the train are spectacular! The food and drinks at the 2 stops was superb and the price is unbelievable for a 5 hour excursion - 120 rrand.

Port Elizabeth



Port Elizabeth is a city on Algoa Bay in South Africa's Eastern Cape Province. A major port, it's also known for its numerous beaches.

Port Elizabeth fringes Algoa Bay at the western end of the Sunshine Coast, and offers many good bathing beaches and surf spots. It's also a convenient gateway to worthy destinations in either direction along the coast, as well as to the eastern Karoo. Sadly, with the notable exception of vibrant Richmond Hill and a few other urban-regeneration

projects, the city centre remains rather rundown. Many of the more upmarket shops, restaurants and bars are found in the suburban shopping centres.

Suggestions

St George's Park; If you like a bit of nature, this park is the best PE has to offer. There are lots of pathways and it is the perfect place to do some mindless wandering.

There are lots of game reserves in and around the area so a little research is required, regarding time based around your visit if you are thinking DIY or if offered a ships tour.

Port Elizabeth Shore Excursion: Port Elizabeth City Tour; Explore Port Elizabeth's highlights with a local guide on a full-day shore excursion that's tailored to your ship's schedule. Visit the City Hall, markets, squares, and parks, and learn about Port Elizabeth history and culture along the way. This 4-hour Port Elizabeth shore excursion includes pickup and drop-off at the cruise port, entrance fees, and transport by luxury vehicle, and it's limited to 13 people for personal service. <http://springbokatlas.com/>

Richards Bay



Richards Bay is a town in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

The town is vibrant and fast becoming the north coast holiday destination, offering spectacular scenery and unspoilt beaches and enjoys a summer climate all year round. The town boasts the country's largest harbour and some of its most magnificent wetland scenery. "Industrial Tourism" is actively promoted and groups are able to visit industrial plants, mines and other operations.

The town also offers the visitor entrance to Zululand. This once forgotten corner of the African continent is a land of exquisite beauty characterised by incredible diversity. On its eastern boundary its golden shores are gently caressed by the warm waters of the Indian Ocean.

Suggestions

Dlinza Forest Aerial Boardwalk; The boardwalk extends some 127 metres and is perched 10 metres above the forest floor. It culminates in a steel viewing platform, which is a breath-taking 20 metres high, giving visitors a panoramic view of the fauna and flora that is found so abundantly in this part of the country.

Beaches

Pelican Island; This must be one of the best beaches in the area. Very well kept and clean sand. Pelican Island was built around 1976 when the original Richards Bay Harbour was established and is utilized by the locals as a place to relax and play in the sun.

Alkantstrand Beach; The beach is nice and clean. Beautiful white beach. You can relax with the family with braai facilities. Just love to sit on the pier and watch the waves break on the dollos.

PACIFIC OCEAN CANADA & ALASKA

CANADA

Vancouver



Vancouver, a bustling west coast seaport in British Columbia, is among Canada's densest, most ethnically diverse cities. A popular filming location, it's surrounded by mountains, and also has thriving art, theatre and music scenes.

What happens when a "gassy" Englishman rows into town feeling thirsty? A pub is born. And from that a city—in this case Vancouver. Though the pubs are plentiful, food

and drink aren't the only things to take in during your trip. In its 150 years, Vancouver has grown into a cosmopolitan city nestled in the great outdoors. Enjoy the snow-capped mountains, waterfront forests, cityside beaches, Olympic history and the world's highest suspension bridge.

Before going I would suggestion you do your research. There is so much to see and maybe not all that time to do it in. This may help. <https://www.tourismvancouver.com/>

Suggestions

Vancouver Lookout; The Lookout on top of Harbour Centre - A great place for a 360-degree view of Metro Vancouver and beyond - on a clear day. If the weather is not cooperating wait. The glass elevator ride takes 40-seconds to rise just over 553 feet to the observation deck.

Brockton Point Totem Pole; It is a beautiful spot to stop as you make your way around Stanley Park. It's definitely worth checking it out and taking pictures but do try to know what these poles are. They are iconic, historic and symbolic too.

Stanley Park; with all the aspects and attractions within the park are well worth seeing. You can pick a certain area for a quick trip or spend all day exploring the park. It is indeed a treasure within Vancouver.

Gastown; Wander, explore lively restaurants, character buildings, wide variety of food. Pubs, shopping, very entertaining and enjoyable walk, find a coffee or dessert spot, people watch, enjoy the view.

Steam Clock; This is a lovely restored piece of history in Gastown, read the historical information that is presented around the base of the clock. Although it does not run on steam anymore it is still cool to see and get a picture with

Cruise Destinations

Victoria



Victoria, capital of British Columbia, sits on the craggy southern end of Vancouver Island. With abundant parkland, it's known for outdoor activities. Established in 1843 as a fort for the Hudson's Bay Company, Victoria's British ancestry is apparent in the double-decker buses, horse-drawn carriages, formal gardens and tearooms. The city is now a cosmopolitan centre with a lively entertainment scene and a wonderful array of attractions.

You really need to plan your stay here. There is such a lot to do in and around this city

Suggestions

Inner Harbour; The Inner Harbour is a wonderful place to walk and enjoy the marine life of Victoria from the waterway with the flying boats to the water craft ranging from the large ferries to the yachts. The way the area is also lit of a night time adds to the atmosphere.

Royal BC Museum; This is a world class museum with an extensive collection of all things BC.

Beacon Hill Park; A beautiful park with nice water features and lovely landscaping. It has wild peacocks and ducks. It is close to all the "tourist-y" stuff in downtown Victoria so great to visit for a break. There are many nearby cafes and restaurants

ALASKA



Aleutian Islands (Dutch Harbor)

Dutch Harbor is a harbour on Amaknak Island in Unalaska, Alaska. It was the location of the Battle of Dutch Harbor in June 1942, and was one of the few sites, besides the attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, in American territory to be bombed by the Japanese during World War II.[1]

My research did not find much to do and see in this port.

Suggestions

Aleutian World War II Visitor Center; The Aleutian WW2 Visitor Center is at the beginning of the town. This is a very nice small museum which commemorates the events of the Japanese attack on Dutch Harbor and Unalaska and on the Aleutian Islands in World War II.

Cruise Destinations

Glacier Bay



Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve is a vast area of southeast Alaska's Inside Passage, a coastal route plied by cruise ships and other vessels.

Covering 3.3 million acres of rugged mountains, dynamic glaciers, temperate rainforest, wild coastlines and deep sheltered fjords, Glacier Bay National Park is a highlight of Alaska's Inside Passage and part of a 25-million acre World Heritage Site—one of the world's largest

international protected areas.

Most visitors to Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve spend a day in Glacier Bay on large cruise ships as part of a longer cruise originating at a major west coast city. It is an amazing day cruising through the best of Alaska. The spectacular scenery and wildlife of Glacier Bay make it a highlight of any Alaska cruise. The ship travels into the heart of the Fairweather Mountains for a trip into the ice ages. Watch for icebergs and calving glaciers. Scan the shorelines for wildlife...brown bears, mountain goats, sea otters, sea lions, harbor seals, bald eagles, and a variety of seabirds are regularly seen.

What to Expect

You will receive a copy of the park map/guide in your stateroom the evening before your arrival in Glacier Bay.

Cruise ships typically spend a full day (9-10 hours) in Glacier Bay including a stop at a major tidewater glacier.

National Park Service park rangers board the ship to provide a narrative about important aspects of the visit, give special presentations about the park, kid's activities, staff an information desk, and answer all of your questions.

Note: Cruise ships do not dock anywhere in Glacier Bay National Park.

Hubbard Glacier



Hubbard Glacier is a glacier located in eastern Alaska and part of Yukon, Canada.

The closer you get, the colder it gets. My advice; wear your coat, a hat and some gloves. you may find hand warmers useful too, especially if you go early in the season. The helipad is opened up so you can get a really good view but it does get busy. The water was still frozen in places and you can hear the grinding of the ice. Keep a look out on the icebergs for bald eagles. The ship does a complete turn so it

doesn't matter if you stand port side or starboard side. The views are stunning, photos don't do it justice. And remember if you hear it, you've missed it. Getting a calving on video (and/or a photo) is near on impossible but good fun trying.

Icy Strait



Icy Strait Point is a privately owned tourist destination just outside the small village of Hoonah, Alaska. It is located on Chichagof Island and is named after the nearby Icy Strait.

It is an attractive new destination expressly for cruisers that's manmade but not commercialized. Icy Strait offers pretty woodland walks, an insight into Tlingit history and culture, a wide range of back-to-nature adventures and high-quality restaurants. Upmarket craft shops feature artisan crafts and locally made goods like woodland berry jam and confectionery, rather than the "made in Taiwan" good so prevalent in, say, Juneau. Buildings are constructed from sustainable local timber and built by local Tlingit workers in traditional style.

Suggestions

Zip Rider; Icy Strait Point has the world's largest Zip Rider. The ride begins 410 meters (1,435 feet) up the mountain behind Icy Strait Point. From there, clear days offer views that take in the mouth of Glacier Bay and the giant mountains beyond.

Whale-Watching; Icy Strait Point is about a five-minute boat ride from Point Adolphus, on the south side of Icy Strait, where a deep upwelling rich with krill turns the sea into a buffet for humpbacks.

Native Alaskan Culture; The town of Hoonah and the Huna Totem Corporation spent nearly 10 years restoring the cannery site. It quickly became the centre of Hoonah's cultural revival, hosting traditional Tlingit songs and dances at the Heritage Centre Native Theatre.

Juneau



Juneau, Alaska's remote capital, sits in the state's panhandle, at the base of 3,819-ft. Mt. Roberts. It's a popular cruise-ship stop, reachable only by boat or seaplane.

This place will definitely fill your day—and then some. Old-growth forest, snow-capped mountains, glaciers, ice caves, spawning salmon streams, prime bear habitat, and migratory whale routes all lie within city limits. A short boat or seaplane ride can bring spouting humpbacks, breaching orcas, and some of the best sport fishing on the planet. Hop in a

kayak, jump on a bike, or lace up your (waterproof!) hiking boots for some human-powered exploration.

Of course, there's more to Juneau than natural beauty. Set against our stunning backdrop are original Gold Rush-era buildings, art galleries, museums, historic and Native heritage sites, restaurants, bars, cafes, shopping, and seafood that doesn't get any fresher.

Suggestions

There is a tram that carries visitors 1,800 feet up Mt. Roberts to an alpine area with hiking trails, wildflowers and views of Gastineau Channel.

Nugget Falls; The transport from the port to the mirador takes only a few minutes, the view is very beautiful and you have to take a short "hike" (1/4 mile?) it is flat and paved. However, it is crawling with tourists by mid-morning, so it's definitely best to go early if you can. You can walk up very close to the base of Nugget Falls and have beautiful views of Mendenhall Glacier, which apparently used to come all the way to the side of the falls, but now is tucked back in a bay. Worth the short walk to take it in!

Cruise Destinations

Alaska State Museum; This Museum is the most amazing museum - it is set in a new and modern building that is well designed and the displays are amazing - such an incredible selection and stories of the history of Alaska and the area.

More help with your planning here: http://www.traveljuneau.com/cms/d/day_trips.php

Ketchikan



Ketchikan is an Alaskan city facing the Inside Passage, a popular cruise route along the state's southeastern coast. It's known for its many Native American totem poles, on display throughout town.

Ketchikan is known as Alaska's "first city" due to its location at the southern tip of the Inside Passage - it is the first city you reach as you cruise north, and for many visitors, their first introduction to the beauty and majesty of Alaska.

Suggestions

Creek Street; This is atmospheric and well worth the stroll from the port. do it as part of the ketchikan walk - leaflet available from visitor centre

Totem Bight State Historical Park; If you're exploring Ketchikan you must stop by Totem Bight State park it is a great way to explore and learn about the native people here and what totems were used for and what they symbolize. The park has great educational signs so you can learn about totems as well as appreciate the beauty of the temperate rainforest.

Tongass Historical Museum; A great little museum setting out the history of Ketchikan. Well worth half an hour of your time. The "Then and Now" exhibit really show the spirit of the community and demonstrates the fact that "the more things change, the more they stay the same." A beautiful location overlooking Ketchikan Creek and easy access from old downtown.

More here to help you plan your visit: <http://www.visit-ketchikan.com/>

Sitka



Sitka is an Alaskan city and borough near Juneau, the state capital. It's spread over Baranof Island, part of Chichagof Island and others. It is thought to be the most beautiful of southeast Alaska cities. Nestled on the west side of Baranof Island, it is flanked on the east by majestic snow-capped mountains and on the west by the Pacific Ocean.

Suggestions

Sitka National Historic Park/Totem Park; Situated just outside of the bustling downtown and right on the waterfront, the visitor centre houses a good selection of First Nation artifacts and contemporary artwork.

Cruise Destinations

Russian Bishop's House; Lots of information, photographs and artifacts from the early days of Russian occupation of Sitka. The restored Russian Bishop's House is a treasure trove of information, videos and a chapel.

Depending on what you want to do a little research brings up tours for whale watching or bear sighting.

Skagway



Skagway is a compact city in southeast Alaska, set along the popular cruise route the Inside Passage. It's home to many gold-rush-era buildings, now preserved as part of the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park.

Suggestions

Davidson Glacier; If you want an awesome day then this is it. You are pick up at your ship, then onto a private boat. Eagles and wildlife along the way. This is a nature excursion, so be prepared with your camera. For DIY try Alaska Shore Excursions.

Jewell Gardens; Alaska is not where you'd expect to find a "show" garden, but that's exactly what this is. To lunch, overlooking such a large garden, including a small train. An excellent self-guided walking tour brochure describes the 22 flower beds in detail. The glassworks is a bonus.

Red Onion Saloon Brothel Museum; This is an awesome look back to what happened in the old days.

Lower Reid Falls; You can walk to the cemetery from town 1/2 hour or take the inexpensive shuttle. The falls are in back of the cemetery. As soon as you reach the cemetery and walk a little in the direction of the falls, you can already hear it roaring.

Free Tour; Five times a day during the summer, National Park Service rangers lead a free, 45-minute walking tour of the historic district, stopping at historic buildings like the Mascot Saloon Museum, the first cabin built in Skagway and one of the town's earliest brothels.

Tracy Arm Fjord



The Tracy Arm Fjord is 45 miles south of Juneau, but worth the trek. It is named after the Secretary of the Navy Benjamin Franklin Tracy.

Absolutely special scenery with 1,000' plus waterfalls coming straight off cliffs, cascading in front of your boat. Steep rock walls with mt. goats coming to water level and seals floating in the numerous icebergs between North and South Sawyer Glaciers. Orcas also hunt these

waters,

If your cruise ship doesn't sail through the glaciers, you'll have to take a boat tour, which usually lasts an entire day. You get straight off your cruise ship onto a smaller boat which allowed you to get right up close to the Glacier. There is fantastic scenery & wildlife along the way, inside a warm boat. Remember to take hat, gloves, warm jacket & even a scarf even in the month of July as it's extremely cold when you go outside to get great views & photos. A must see if you're in the area.

Whittier



Whittier is situated at the head of Passage Canal, the community of Whittier is approximately 58 miles southeast of Anchorage. Whittier is by far the most visited gateway to the mesmerizing wilderness of Prince William Sound.

Each summer, thousands of visitors arrive at this magnificent port by ship, train, or automobile.

Suggestions

Prince William Sound Museum; Come inside the Anchor Inn in downtown Whittier where a small but fascinating museum gives a glimpse of Whittier's interesting history.

Whittier Harbour; Harbour seals and sea otters are common sights in the Whittier Small Boat Harbor. You might also see salmon enthusiastically leaping from the water.

For something different, visit the 14-story building called Begich Towers on the edge of town, it is a former Army barracks, resembling an aging hotel, where most of the town's 200 residents live.