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from their faces into their hearts"*

Martin Buxbaum



Are you ready to try a Cruise holiday?

September 27, 2010



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A Cruise for Every Budget

Cruises used to be for the wealthy elite, but now there are cruises to suit every type of traveler and every budget. Regular cruisers say it's the way to travel, filled with luxury, adventure, unique ports of call to explore and lots of activities to participate in. Finding the right cruise isn't difficult, since the cruise industry continues to flourish through the philosophy of offering something for everyone. Fall is particularly popular with the 50-plus crowd.

How to Start Planning Your Cruise

It pays to work with a knowledgeable travel agent that specializes in cruises, but you should do some

homework on your own and have some ideas about where you'd like to go. One of the best sources is the [Fielding Guide to Worldwide Cruising](#). As with most things in life, it's important to ask the right questions and to be open and honest about your expectations of a cruise.

Picking the Right Cruise Line

Choose the cruise line and fellow passengers that match your personality. This can make or break your first cruise holiday. If there isn't a match with the cruise line, you may not cruise again. Some have dress codes and assigned seating times for meals, however, most cruise lines are becoming increasingly casual these days as even upscale guests prefer to relax and unwind these days. Some of the high end lines such as Cunard offer a bit more of a traditional cruise experience.

Picking the Destination

The Caribbean is still one of the most popular destinations, but the 50-plus generation is experiencing "been there, done that" fatigue. This is especially true of the more active, adventurous set who are there for more than just the cruise experience itself and are seeking out new, exciting destinations to explore. Experienced cruisers are flocking to more remote areas such as Egypt and China. A growth in demand for cruises along China's Yangtze River, for example, has led to the creation of the largest and most technologically advanced river cruise ship in the world by American-managed Victoria Cruises. China's pre-eminent cruise line now has eight five-star vessels on the mist-shrouded river, all of them operating close to capacity throughout peak season.

"As travellers become accustomed to the traditionally popular cruise itineraries closer to home, they begin to set their sights on more remote locations such as river cruises on China's mist-shrouded Yangtze," said Larry Greenman, manager of public relations and customer service for American-managed Victoria Cruises, the pioneers of luxury, five-star cruising on the Yangtze River.

"In fact, we have seen so much demand for Yangtze River cruising, many of our ships have been sailing at or close to full capacity during this soft economy, especially the Victoria Jenna, our newest and largest five-star vessel," he added. Greenman also noted that, "Canadians have accounted for a growing percentage of travellers on our programmes.

Do you pick the destination or cruise line first? It depends which is more important to you. If you are set on Hawaii, you might want to go with Holland America as they have the most experience there. Similarly, NCL is widely regarded as the best line for Hawaii cruises. If you are open to different destinations, sometimes it's best to decide which cruise line to sail with first. Each of the cruise lines have their own strengths. For example, RCI is known for entertainment, while Celebrity's reputation is for culinary superiority. While NCL might not score as highly as Celebrity in the food category, it offers one of the most flexible dining programmes out there. Holland America is perhaps the most well-rounded line among the mass market cruises, notable for a slightly higher elegance factor, and then you have the high-end cruise companies like Cunard, Seaborn and Regent Seven Seas.

How to Save Money on Your Cruise

With the exception of Christmas and New years, there are always discounts. The best time to travel on the cheap is during low season which varies depending on where you are going. If you can be flexible, it sometimes pays to wait until the last minute. While the best deals are found last minute, this is only the case when the ship is running half empty. Cruise lines make just as much from drinks and purchases onboard as they do from booking fees so they will do whatever it takes to fill those ships. When cruises are selling well and have few cabins remaining, the price goes up. If you are set on a specific departure of a particular itinerary, the safe bet would be to book it as soon as you can.

Planning Ahead for Your Cruise

Make sure to plan your onboard activities early. Spas on ships have a limited number of treatment rooms, so book your pedicures and facials ahead of time if possible. Ask if there are discounts for booking treatments on

days in port. For more planning advice, check out [Cruise Critic](#) for comments directly from passengers.

Some other websites to check out while planning your next cruise:

[Victoria Cruises](#)

[Uniworld](#)

[Avalon Waterways](#)

[Cruise Critic](#)

[Prow's Edge Magazine](#)

[eCruises](#)

[Sure Cruise](#)

[Cruise and Travel Lifestyles](#)

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Have you ever gone on a cruise? What are your favourite destinations and things about cruising?

*Impowerage does not endorse or recommend any specific cruises, websites or companies.



About the Author: Melody Wren is a perennial lifestyle, travel, and food writer. She is a regular contributor to the Toronto Star's [Your Home](#) and the Well Fed Network. Visit Melody at [Melodywren.com](#)

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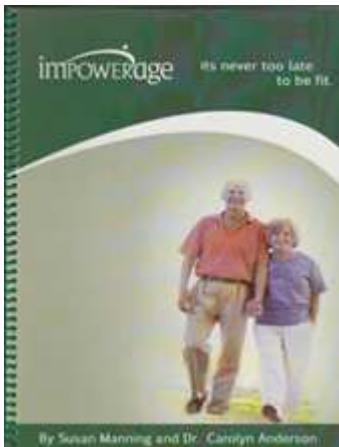
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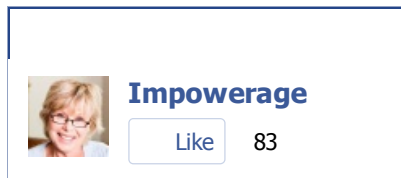
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