

We were so happy to be able to take this cruise with our son and his family as it was two years since we were able to get together because of Covid. The cruise was enjoyable, the food was terrific and the service was magnificent. -Marie Dorry



THANKSGIVING GETAWAY



Just a note to say thanks! I really appreciate your generosity on the trip—it was not necessary but put to good use.. Also, I am so grateful for how well you have treated my folks on all their trips.

Thanks again. Mike Friedrich

Thanks for all your help coordinating the Budweiser/Bailey Thanksgiving cruise and glad you joined us.

-Art Budweiser

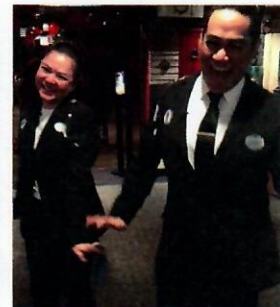


We had a wonderful time. The ship was beautiful and we enjoyed the music shows and all the different music venues. Thanks for the extra credit for each cabin. -Beth, Joe & Kristen

Thank you again Nancy and Home Town Travel for the great job on my Thanksgiving cruise. You will always find someone who is not satisfied with something, but I can say there was not a thing that disappointed. Thanks for the on board credit. I made some new friends and looking forward to sailing with them again. As always, you went above and beyond. Merry Christmas! -Mary Ann Rees



NANCY
and
DENNIS
trying
iFLY



Thanksgiving Getaway

We had a group of just over twenty-five people sail for Thanksgiving aboard Royal Caribbean's Anthem of the Seas from Cape Liberty over the holiday. As it has been almost two years of no cruising with Covid, I couldn't wait to get back to one of my favorite ways to vacation. Things were a bit different with masks and the limited self service in the buffet along with sailing at about a 60% capacity but overall, this was one of the best RCCL cruises I have ever taken. The best part of the experience was the staff-from everyone in Guest Services to my cabin steward Aris along with the entire dining room team beginning with the smiling faces of Jonathan and Laura who greeted us each evening and even sometimes with their 'happy dance'. Our waiter Norman and his assistant Godfrey knew the special things we liked and never had to ask for anything twice. The head waiter Johnson went beyond; getting me the recipe for a special Indian dessert that was not even on the menu to making coconut sorbet available often. My dessert guru. The food was exceptionally good.

From the Cavern to the Rooftops, the Beatles (A Musical Celebration) was one of the most authentic sounding musical groups I have heard while sailing. Frankie and the Dreamers highlighted everything 'Jersey Boys' and violinist David Klinkenberg added humor to his vast musical talents. In addition, I crossed two more things off the bucket list. I finally made it to Pig Island in the Bahamas and two of us experienced iFly.

I know everyone had an outstanding time and I cannot wait to sail with them again soon.

MSC Seashore Inaugural

One of the most rewarding opportunities of being a travel consultant is having the chance to experience a new ship. I recently witnessed Sophia Loren christen MSC's newest ship, the Seashore. The naming ceremony with the champagne bottle crashing into the hull of a new ship was so exciting.

The ship was as magnificent as her sister, the Seaside, with even more amenities. A visit to their private island, Ocean Cay, topped off the pre-inaugural festivities. I was able to bring a guest and she had never cruised before and here is what she thought - For a long time I was hesitant to go on a cruise because I wasn't sure what to expect. I recently went on my very first cruise and it completely surpassed anything I imagined. It was on a new ship named the MSC Seashore. The ship and accommodations were incredible. There were so many choices in every aspect including food, entertainment, and services. All the staff always went above and beyond for everyone. The private island was gorgeous and there were literally beaches everywhere. Found some of the most beautiful seashells! Atmosphere was lovely and the best staff there as well. One highlight was the family atmosphere with the children's pool, zombie blasting and the Formula 1 simulator (crashed a few times). Smooth sailing the whole time and I can't wait to book another longer trip next time!



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Holiday Cheesecake



Sugar cookie meets cheesecake in this brilliant holiday mashup. When you give a creamy vanilla cheesecake the royal icing treatment, all dessert lovers win.

Ingredients: One 16.5 oz. tube store bought sugar cookie dough, four 8 oz. packages of cream cheese (at room temperature), two cups of granulated sugar, one cup sour cream, two tablespoons vanilla extract, four large eggs (at room temperature), red and green sprinkles for decorating, one 1 lb. box of confectioners' sugar (about four cups), two tablespoons of meringue powder, red and green food coloring.

Position an oven rack in the middle of the oven and preheat to 350 degrees F. Press the cookie dough into the bottom of a 9-inch springform pan (use the bottom of a measuring cup to help spread it out and make it even). Bake until the cookie is set and golden brown, 12 to 15 minutes. Let cool completely, about 30 minutes.

Wrap the bottom and sides of the pan with a large piece of foil and put it in a large roasting pan. Reduce the oven temperature to 325 degrees F. Beat the cream cheese and granulated sugar together in a large bowl with an electric mixer on medium speed for 1 minute. Add the sour cream and vanilla and beat until just combined. Mix in the eggs by hand, one at a time, until just combined. (Take care not to overmix or the cheesecake will puff up and crack). Pour the batter into the springform pan. Add enough hot water to the roasting pan to come about halfway up the side of the springform pan.

Bake until the outside of the cake is set but the center is still slightly loose, about 1 hour and 20 minutes. Turn the oven off and leave the cheesecake in the oven for another hour. Remove the cheesecake from the roasting pan to a cooling rack. Run a knife around the edge and cool to room temperature. Cover and refrigerate at least 8 hours.

Run a knife around the edge of the pan once more and unlock to unmold the cheesecake. Transfer to a serving platter or cake stand and smooth the edges with a knife. Pat the Jimmie sprinkles into the sides of the cheesecake making sure not to cover the crust or get any on top.

Whisk together the confectioners' sugar and meringue powder in a large bowl. Add 5 tablespoons water and beat with an electric mixer on medium-high speed until soft glossy peaks form, adding up to 1 more tablespoon water if necessary.

Transfer about 1/2 cup of the royal icing to a pastry bag fitted with a small round tip. Thin the remaining icing with 1 teaspoon of water at a time until it is the consistency of syrup (you know you have reached the right consistency if you drizzle a bit of the icing and it sinks back into the icing within 8 to 10 seconds). Transfer 1 cup of the thinned icing in another pastry bag fitted with a small round tip. Divide the remaining batter between two small bowl and color one red and one green with the red and green gel food coloring.

Use the thick white icing to pipe a large scalloped circle around the cake leaving a 3/4-inch border. Use the thinned white icing to fill the center of the scalloped circle. Use an offset spatula to spread the icing out so that it is smooth. Decorate with the colored icing while the white icing is still set. Chill the cake until the icing is set, at least 1 hour.



MSC

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Which Cruise Lines Require COVID-19 Vaccinations?

American Queen Steamboat Company and Victory Cruise Lines

Sister brands American Queen Steamboat Company and Victory Cruise Lines were first to indicate that they would be requiring COVID-19 vaccinations for guests.

Atlas Ocean Voyages

Atlas Ocean Voyages requires all of its guests and crew to be fully vaccinated. Also, passengers must provide a negative PCR test up to 72 hours or a negative antigen test up to 48 hours before boarding. Additionally, another antigen test will be conducted at embarkation.

Azamara

Azamara has scheduled its return to service, provided that all guests and crew are vaccinated against COVID-19 no later than 14 days prior to departure.

Carnival Cruise Line

When Carnival Cruise Line returns to service in July, it will require guests to show proof of having received their final dose of a CDC-approved COVID-19 vaccine at least 14 days before cruising.

Celebrity Cruises

Celebrity Cruises has resumed sailings with at least 95% of passengers and all crew vaccinated. All guests who are eligible must be fully vaccinated at least 14 days prior to sailing.

Disney Cruise Line

Disney Cruise Line guests ages 5 and over must be fully vaccinated from Jan. 13, 2022. Guests who are not vaccine eligible due to age must provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test result, paid by the guest and taken between three days and 24 hours before the sail date. All passengers are required to take a COVID-19 test, paid by the cruise line, at the terminal prior to boarding.

MSC Cruises

MSC Cruises is rolling out a fleet-wide COVID-19 vaccination program for its entire crew. The line is now requiring passengers 12 years or older to be fully vaccinated on sailings in the Caribbean starting Sept. 3, 2021.

Norwegian Cruise Line, Oceania Cruises and Regent Seven Seas Cruises

Consistent with its sister brands — Oceania Cruises and Regent Seven Seas Cruises — Norwegian Cruise Line plans to resume sailings from U.S. ports on or about July 4, 2021, with all guests and crew vaccinated against COVID-19. Proof of full FDA-, EMA- or WHO-approved protection will be required no less than two weeks prior to embarkation.

Royal Caribbean International

Royal Caribbean International will require guest vaccines from The Bahamas and other international ports, as well as now guests age 12 and older, beginning on Sept. 1, 2021, from U.S. homeports. Meanwhile, all crew on every ship must be fully vaccinated.

Virgin Voyages

Virgin Voyages will require vaccines onboard its adults-only ship, Scarlet Lady

Windstar Cruises

Windstar Cruises requires proof of a COVID-19 vaccine for all passengers sailing on the line's yachts. Guests will be required to provide proof of the vaccination (finished within two weeks of the embarkation date) before boarding. Negative COVID-19 test results will also be required