



NEWS RELEASE

2009 CRUISES NOW AVAILABLE AT 1980 PRICES, SAYS NEW BERLITZ CRUISE GUIDE

Basic prices for cruising are as low now as they were in 1980, according to the most feared critic in the cruising business, Douglas Ward, the British author of the **Berlitz Complete Guide to Cruising and Cruise Ships 2009** (to be published 1 October 2008). Consequently, cruising is opening up to a much wider audience, particularly young people and families. However, Ward advises, many items and facilities that used to be included in the basic cruise fare now cost extra as cruise lines try to maximise onboard revenue.



Those looking for good value in Europe, Ward warns, should book early, particularly for ships that operate in US dollars, as cruise lines have to fix their brochure prices at least a year in advance. They should also keep an eye on fuel surcharges.

Often referred to as the 'bible to the world of cruising', the fully revised and updated annual Berlitz Guide, with its excellent advice and hard-hitting reviews of 270 cruise ships, independently exposes the best and worst scoring cruise ships, using an internationally accepted rating system devised by Ward himself. Within the Guide, now in its 24th year, Ward, who has some 980 cruises under his belt, admits that the quality of service offered has often been affected by price discounting, resulting in a number of surprise relegations as ships have been moved to a lower category in the book's influential star ratings.



This Guide offers a comprehensive account of the industry today for the more experienced cruiser. Check out the tables and charts if you want to know, for example, about the 10 Great Shipboard Spas, the Best Choice for Children, the 10 Top Expeditions, the 20 Largest Suites Afloat or, new for 2009, the 100 Most Popular Shore Excursions.

Keeping Track of the Sea Changes

The cruising world can be a minefield. At a time when many cruise ships are changing hands, changing names, being refurbished or even stretched (with a new section inserted to make them bigger), it's easy to lose track. The 2009 Guide highlights some of the confusing revamps (page 176), while regular cruise goers who have purchased the Guide are entitled to receive Douglas Ward's free quarterly email newsletter. Among the in-depth ship by ship reviews of over 270 cruise ships are the 20 new ships launched in 2008, and previews of the ships set to debut in 2009.

Trends Forecast & What's New in Cruising

According to the Berlitz cruise guru;

- In the UK we have more ships sailing out of smaller ports. No longer just limited to Southampton and Dover, and just as regional airports are now popular, so too are Edinburgh, Newcastle and Liverpool ports.
- Mid-size ships will attract increasing numbers of discerning cruise-goers thanks to the introduction of more large resort ships which can offer a rather sanitized experience.
- Expect more cruise lines to ban smoking in all cabins and on balconies.
- More cruise lines offer short 'getaway' cruises for those with little time, while 20 ships offer grand round the world voyages.
- With cruising now appealing to more active passengers, adventurous excursions are hot: go crocodile hunting by Zodiac, dog sledding on a glacier, jungle canopy ziplining or swimming with sharks.
- Following the 2001 terrorist attacks, many American passengers simply don't want to fly overseas, resulting in Homeland Cruising ports. Pre-2001, ships regularly sailed from just half a dozen ports, but this grew virtually overnight to around 25. The Guide evaluates their 'welcome' from hospitality to hostility (page 10).

The Winners & Losers

Europa (page 362), a 'Small Ship' of Hapag Lloyd Cruises, is the only vessel to receive the exclusive *5-star Plus* rating, scoring 1,852 points out of a total of 2,000. Within its wake are five Boutique-style Ships: SeaDream II and SeaDream I (with 1,788 and 1,786 points respectively), Seabourn Legend (1,779), Seabourn Spirit (1,770) and Seabourn Pride (1,769).

Bumping along 'on the bottom' is the 1* ship, Grande Caribe (page 387) with just 744 points. Of *easyCruise Life*, Ward in his typically frank, warts-and-all style, says, "It's all noise and no poise – more of a bus service, really."

Berlitz *Complete Guide to Cruising & Cruise Ships 2009* (£16.99, 700 pages) is available from bookshops and on line at www.berlitzpublishing.com.

Douglas Ward is also author of the recently published Berlitz *First-Time Cruise Guide*, intended for those new to cruising (£9.99, 256 pages).

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