

Cruise & Vacation News

From Benefit Cruise & Travel

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What's new in Cruising:

Several innovative new ships are on the horizon for the major cruise lines. But, without a doubt, Royal Caribbean's Oasis of the Seas is going to be the major news story of 2009. Unbelievable new features!

ROYAL CARIBBEAN

Oasis of the Seas - makes its debut December 2009. It will be the LARGEST ship in the world weighing in at over 240,000 Gross Tons and holding 5,400 passengers.

Some of the fantastic new features will include an area to simulate Central Park, a Royal Promenade for shopping, a Boardwalk complete with Carousel, Vitality at Sea Spa & Fitness Center, Pool & Sports Zone with 2 FloRiders and ZIP lines (yes, you read that right - ZIP lines on a cruise ship!) and an Entertainment Place with many new theaters including a water venue.

The accommodations on Oasis have been reinvented to include balcony cabins that overlook Central Park and Boardwalk, two story loft suites and Spa suites along with the more standard cabins and suites.

For more information, visit our website and click on the special link for Oasis of the Seas.

CARNIVAL

Now open for reservations, it's time to start living the dream with Carnival's most visionary ship yet. Setting sail in September 2009, CARNIVAL DREAM was designed to be the largest and most innovative floating resort in the "Fun Ship" fleet. Among many amazing features, she will boast more outdoor deck space, more stateroom categories, the largest spa they've ever built, Carnival Waterworks and a new dining and entertainment complex called The Piazza. Once completed, this ship will literally be in a class all her own.

PRINCESS CRUISE LINES

The Ruby Princess makes her American debut on November 6. I will be onboard taking plenty of pictures which I will share in our blog. America's Most Romantic Couple - Trista & Ryan, will be celebrating their 5th anniversary onboard and serving as Inaugural hosts. With nearly 900 staterooms with private balconies, Ruby Princess is perfect for enjoying the scenic Caribbean islands.

HOLLAND AMERICA

Launching her maiden voyage in July of 2008, the ms Eurodam marks Holland America Line's new Signature Class

vessels. The ms Eurodam furthers the evolution of their sophisticated mid-sized ships with 11 passenger decks, a new topside Pan-Asian restaurant and lounge surrounded by panoramic views, an Explorer's Lounge Bar, a new Italian restaurant adjacent to the Lido, elegant luxury jewelry boutique, new atrium bar area, an enhanced and reconfigured show lounge and a new photographic and imaging center. On the technical side, the ms Eurodam will feature the latest state-of-the-art navigation and safety systems. The vessel will be powered by six diesel generators and propelled by the latest Azipod propulsion technology.

SMALL SHIP CRUISING AMERICAN STYLE

I am a firm believer in the benefits of small ship cruising. In fact, I'm a Certified Small Ship Partner with Cruise West. The personal experience of these cruises creates fantastic memories not only of the destination but of the new friends met onboard. Up-close cruising provides you with more experiences of the sights, sounds and even smells of your destination. (Who could forget Seal Island!) Destinations include Alaska, British Columbia, Snake River, Sea of Cortes and more. New for 2009 - Galapagos Islands!

Taste of the Pacific Northwest and the California Wine Country itineraries enable you to experience the epicurean delights of the Willamette, Sonoma and Napa Valleys. A must for wine lovers!

Because of our special designation, I can offer you an additional 10% discount on select sailings - combinable with Early Booking and Past Passenger Discounts!

Short videos are available on the website under Cruise promos.

RIVER CRUISING

With the closing ceremonies of the 2008 Summer Olympics, excitement is still running high for China travel. What better way to see the wonders of China than on a 6 day Viking River cruise on the Yangtze River along with a 5 day cruise tour, all meals and included shore excursions - this cruise is the best way to see the Imperial Jewels of China!

ALASKA

Now is the time to be thinking about booking your 2009 Alaska cruise and cruise tour vacation!

While Alaska is comprised of five distinct areas, the most visited are the Inside Passage, South Central and the Interior. Combinations of these three areas make up the bulk of cruise & tour operator offerings. (We can always customize a tour to the other areas to add to your destination experience!)

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The two most popular Alaska trips are the 7 day cruise and the combination cruise & cruise tour lasting around 13-15 days. The 7 day cruises are usually round trip from either Seattle or Vancouver and visit the highlights of the Inside Passage - Juneau, Ketchikan, Skagway, Sitka and Glacier Bay or Tracy Arm.

The cruise tours will usually be a 7 day cruise one way around the Gulf of Alaska - visiting the Inside Passage highlights and then terminating in Seward or Whittier. Then the fun begins, usually with the train from Anchorage to Denali to Fairbanks. Combinations of numbers of days in each city vary with each tour. Itineraries can be also be reversed to run southbound.

The most important thing I've found is that you must stay in Denali long enough for the opportunity to take the 6-8 hour Tundra Wilderness tour that takes you deep into the National Park and into prime bear habitat. I recommend two nights to everybody. You'll thank me for it later!

I love Alaska - I've been there 3 times and I love to share my experiences with anybody who'll listen! So, if you're considering a visit to the Great Land and need some advise, give me a call!

EUROPE

So many options for cruising Europe! Choose from a sailing to the Eastern or Western Mediterranean, a cruise to the Baltic Capitals, Scandinavia, Great Britain or a slow and stately cruise down the rivers of Europe. Both large ship and small offer great itineraries, wonderful shore excursions and a great value for the dollar.

All the major cruise lines have a presence here with a wide range of itineraries and prices. We can customize a cruise and cruise tour to maximize your time in Europe. If Europe is in your 2009 plans, let's start to discuss the various options now to take advantage of any special offers and early booking discounts available.

What's New in the Caribbean & Mexico?

HUATULCO MEXICO - on the western coast is the newest destination for travelers and the first eco-tourism resort in the hemisphere. Green Globe certification was awarded to Huatulco for its high environmental standards. Deluxe modern resorts are set amidst a natural unspoiled setting. Continental Airlines offers excellent connecting service.

RIVIERA NAYARIT MEXICO - 10 minutes north of the Puerto Vallarta airport lies 100 miles of pristine coastline, perfect climate and white coral beaches and the newest in deluxe hotels and golf courses in western Mexico.

JAMAICA - Ya mon! So many beautiful new hotels and resorts are being built along the north shore between Montego Bay and Ocho Rios. Help Jamaica celebrate it's outstanding performances in the Summer Olympics. Its a party

that's sure to go on all year! We just came back from a week in Ocho Rios at Sandals' Dunn's River Resort. I have one word for this property - outstanding!

All of the agents at Benefit Cruise & Travel are Sandals & Beaches Resorts Certified. If you have questions about Sandals, give us a call.

CAP CANA DOMINICAN REPUBLIC - located just 10 minutes south of the Punta Cana Airport is 24 million square meters of natural wonderland, more than three miles of white sand and crystal blue water beaches, coral reefs, palm trees and wildlife sanctuaries. It's multi-million dollar master plan includes the largest in-land mega yacht marina in the Caribbean, three Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf courses, yacht, golf and beach clubs, casinos and world class resorts.

SAMANA DOMINICAN REPUBLIC - Rustic and unspoiled, Samana's beauty lies in her simplicity. In addition to a top destination for eco-toursits and naturalists, Samana is home to one of the largest and best breeding grounds in the world for the humpback whale. Accommodations include secluded island villas, boutique hotels and large scale resorts.

RIVIERA MAYA MEXICO - Many new, fabulous world class hotels and resorts are being built in this gorgeous strip of Mexico's Yucatan coast: Iberostar, Secrets, Dreams, Barcelo, Ocean, Palladium, RIU and Sol Melia to name just a few.

What's New Locally?

Local Bus tours to the Bridges of Ashtabula County, Wineries, Apple Orchards, Amish Country, Cleveland Historic & Ethnic tour plus many more. If you can't get away for a full week vacation, why not a mini-one day trip or two? Join us as we explore Ohio and the sites that are near and dear to Ohioans everywhere!

Check our blog to see upcoming day trips. Please feel free to give me a call with any suggested itineraries you or your group may find interesting.

We've got plenty of specials for cruisers (see specials page). If a package vacation or tour is your choice, then you have our promise to search for the best available deal.

Don't forget, we have the ability to make a **FUNDRAISER** out of any cruise, package or tour. Just ask us how or visit our website www.benefitcruise.com for details. Cruises and cruise certificates make for an easy and fun way to raise money for your church, charity or non-profit organization.

That's it for the Fall Edition of our Newsletter. Your input is always appreciated - so any comments or thoughts, please email me at sball@benefitcruisetravel.com.

When ever you're ready to book your 2009 vacation, I'll be waiting for your call! ~ SUE

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