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SHIP REVIEW

Holland America NOORDAM

We had the privilege of sailing on the inaugural cruise of the Holland America **MS NOORDAM** in February of 2006. The **Noordam** is the last of the lines VISTA class ships and certainly the best.



The first **Noordam** was designed for the transatlantic run between Rotterdam Netherlands and New York City and she operated between 1902 and 1928. The second was built in 1938 and was 10,724 gross tons a mere shadow of the 82,500 GT of today's issue. Pictured above she is 936 feet long and 105.8 ft abeam with 11 passenger decks. She carries 1918 passengers and has a crew of 800. With this substantially larger size than traditional Holland America ships the question is does size destroy the tradition.

In many ways the size enhances the tradition. The addition of many non-traditional features such as a demonstration kitchen and a spectacular Crow's Nest lounge are just a few of the plusses. More balconies, lighter and wider corridors made this reviewer notice that the brown and dingy theme of the Holland of old was gone and forgotten. We had a bright and spacious balcony cabin near the Neptune Lounge on deck 7, well ordered and a spectacular bathroom with private space for milady to do her hair and face.

Both the Promenade and lower promenade decks are where the action is and there is hardly a straight wall anywhere. Space is casually allocated for stores, casino, bars, and specialty events in a manner which gives one the feeling of "room for everything" or conversely without the feeling that they squeezed everything into a small and narrow ship to make it work.

We don't comment about food (because quality can change almost from week to week on any ship) only food sources and aboard **NOORDAM**, Holland has included a

spacious main restaurant and several excellent specialty sites. We became addicted to the Pinnacle Grille especially for breakfast which was a perk with our room. Unfortunately the Lido buffet restaurant is not well laid out with unavoidable cross traffic and frequent crowding situations.

Some of the more modern elements include much more space and attention paid to the CLUB HAL young people's programs and the teen opportunities. It is clear with Noordam and its fellow Vista Class ships that there is a concentrated effort to dispel the oft held image of Holland America as a Senior Citizens stronghold. Yet with this said the crew is "old school" polite, friendly, interested, and supportive of the interests and needs of all ages.

Holland America frequent sailors "Mariner Club" members are treated with substantial perks and a never ending welcome back.

We give the **NOORDAM** an enthusiastic 95 rating on an overall scale of 100

ACH/LCH