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Back to the OLD DAYS!

As a young first time cruiser I boarded the QTEV **Queen of Bermuda** at a pier on New York's West side. I was accompanied by a full compliment of fellow cruisers plus literally hundreds of "friends of cruisers" who were coming aboard for a short visit to the ship to wish us Bon Voyage. After an announcement on the PA they all exited the ship and we sailed to a monstrous hail of confetti and streamers, cheered on by our friends standing on the pier.



Such was the norm for cruise sailings in those days. For whatever reason (probably security) the custom was abandoned but now PRINCESS is re-introducing the Bon Voyage party. With limited numbers and, of course, a fee, visitors will be once again welcomed aboard! The program will debut in March in the ports of Los Angeles and Fort

Lauderdale, and then roll out to New York, San Francisco and Seattle.

The Bon Voyage Experience enables passengers to extend an invitation to their guests to join them onboard during sailing day for a four-course dining room lunch with wine, a ship tour and even a souvenir photo. Passengers and their guests can enjoy priority embarkation and will be able to spend approximately four hours together on the ship before it sets sail. The cost for the program is \$39 per person, which can be applied toward a future Princess cruise.

Norwegian EPIC passes SEA TRIALS!

Norwegian Epic, Norwegian Cruise Line's largest and most innovative ship to date, returned from her first successful sea trials in February 2010, after four days of sailing the Atlantic Ocean for the first time. During the sea trials, 300 technicians and engineers from STX FRANCE SA, along with 30 Norwegian Cruise Line representatives, checked more than 60 different aspects of the ship's performance by running trials of the vessel's speed, maneuverability, hydrodynamics and propulsion, amongst others.



“During her first time ever at sea, Norwegian Epic performed above expectations with excellent marine behavior,” said Roberto Martinoli, Norwegian’s president and COO, who was on-board during the sea trials. “All tests were conducted with positive results. She is a beautiful ship with outstanding performance. Now that sea trials are completed, we can concentrate on finishing the ship and showing her to the world in June.”

A second round of sea trials is scheduled for mid-April in order to finalize all tests, including final speed measurement. The 153,000-gross ton, 4,200-passenger ship – the largest ship ever built in Saint-Nazaire – is scheduled for delivery on June 15, 2010.

DID YOU EVER WONDER WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF YOU DROPPED YOUR CAMERA OVERBOARD?

When standing on the deck of Cunard's **Queen Mary 2** in October 2008, Mr. and Mrs. Gregory from South Africa were enjoying the spectacle of sailing alongside **QE2** and capturing the view on camera when disaster struck as the camera was accidentally dropped into the Atlantic. At the time, both ships were off the south coast of Ireland over the Continental Shelf and the Gregory’s understandably thought their holiday photos were lost forever.

That was until Benito Estevez, a Spanish fisherman who was trawling

the ocean last month, discovered the lost camera in his net! While the camera itself was damaged beyond repair, the photo memory card was amazingly.....intact.

The fisherman contacted both Cunard and the BBC and the BBC managed to locate the couple in South Africa. The Gregory’s have since been reunited with the camera and their photographs.



This is a picture from the camera which was recovered after being lost off the QM2

“In all my years in the travel industry I have never heard of such a heart-warming stroke of luck and we at Cunard are delighted that Mr. and Mrs. Gregory have been reunited with their photos,” said Peter Shanks, president of Cunard Line. “The images are even more poignant as they depict the last transatlantic crossing of the great **QE2** and can never be taken again.”

RCCL TO BASE LIBERTY IN BARCELONA 2011 !

Royal Caribbean International will base the Liberty of the Seas in Barcelona in 2011. The line said the cruise ship sector in Spain continues to grow at an annual rate of between 8 and 10 percent, despite the fall in

tourism. Royal Caribbean predicts a 60 percent growth in guest volume in 2010, compared with a growth of 30 percent in 2009.



WEDDINGS AT SEA NOW MORE EASY OPTION.....

With more and more folks cruising, the desire to be married onboard a cruise ship and especially a cruise ship at sea has increased exponentially. The problem, in the past has been local laws, authority of Captains, and interest of cruise lines.



A spokesman for Princess Cruises, one of only a few cruise lines that can conduct ceremonies while at sea due to its ships' countries of registry (Celebrity and the U.K.-based P&O Cruises can as well), reports that 80

percent of its weddings are performed at sea and are officiated by the ships' captains. For the other 20 percent, passengers either bring their own officiant's (for weddings that happen on a turnaround day in Fort Lauderdale, for example) or utilize the services of a local officiant (for, say, a wedding on a Caribbean beach).

For those desiring a catholic wedding the problem still exists because of clergy requirements that the rite be performed in a church setting. The exception is that Catholic priests may officiate at a non- church wedding where one of the couple is not Roman Catholic.

AVALON WATERWAYS TO INTRODUCE 2 SHIPS..



Avalon Waterways this year will introduce two new vessels in Europe -- the Avalon **Luminary** and Avalon **Felicity** -- increasing the company fleet to 10 ships. The cruise operator operates on the Danube, Rhine, Rhône, Seine and Main rivers. Avalon also operates ships on the Yangtze and Nile rivers and throughout the Galápagos Islands. Avalon introduced two new ships in 2009, Avalon Creativity and Avalon Affinity. The growth is fed in part by a

big-ship traveler base looking for new experiences, said Patrick Clark, managing director of Avalon. Since 2004, international river cruise bookings have grown by more than 200 percent.

ALLURE TO DEBUT EARLY!

In a move that's become the rule rather than the exception, Royal Caribbean has announced that the maiden voyage for Allure of the Seas, Oasis of the Seas' twin, will take place earlier than originally scheduled.



It's the fifth time in a row that either Royal Caribbean or sister line Celebrity Cruises has rescheduled maiden voyages for new ships. In the last two years, the "inaugural voyages" have been moved up for Celebrity's Solstice, Eclipse and Equinox, as well as RCI's Oasis of the Seas.

Instead of sailing its first cruise open to the public on December 12, 2010, Allure of the Seas' first revenue voyage will be a seven-night Western Caribbean itinerary, departing on December 5, 2010. Passengers booked on the non-maiden December 12 cruise will be able to move their cruise up to

December 5, where they'll be accommodated in the same cabin category and be charged the lower of the two fares. Royal Caribbean is also offering \$100 per person -- to members of the Crown & Anchor Society, who are already booked on the December 12 sailing -- to cover some of the costs of their flight changes. Passengers on the December 12 cruise will have until the end of February to switch.

TWO SHIPS DOWN UNDER FOR ROYAL CARIBBEAN

The Radiance of the Seas will sail from Sydney starting in October 2011, giving Royal Caribbean International two ships in Australia.

The 2,501-passenger Radiance will join the 2,435-passenger Rhapsody of the Seas, a ship currently in its third Australian summer season.

"The move is a demonstration of the strength of the local cruise market, and is in response to demand from American, European and Asian visitors to experience Australia and our region onboard our cruise ships," said Gavin Smith, managing director of Royal Caribbean Cruises Australia.

Royal Caribbean said it will release 2011-12 itineraries for the two ships in late March.

CARNIVAL ADMITS RATE INCREASES:

Carnival Cruise Lines said it will increase summer-cruise prices across the board by as much as 5%, depending on departure date, effective March 22. The decision comes after Carnival Corp. saw bookings so far this year "at unprecedented levels." "We'll see if these price increases are supported by demand when the prices move up," said Matthew Jacob, an analyst at Majestic Research.

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