

Sea Princess

Hi Annemari,

Thanks for your card, which we received in the mail. I'd be happy to write a little about the Sea Princess and our 'excellent' fall colours cruise.

Sailing on the Sea Princess was excellent! Because there were so many things to appreciate about the ship, I don't know where to begin. But let's begin at the beginning.

We arrived for embarkation in New York half an hour early and found the workers on the sidewalk just finishing up their lunches. There were a couple of other early birds besides us, and we were all processed quite quickly - no lineups! We dropped our hand baggage in the cabin and went to lunch on the Lido deck. Then we walked about five minutes from the ship to Circle Tours and took a two-hour New York harbour cruise. It was a lovely afternoon for it. After that we decided to walk to the Empire State Building because we could see how close it was. It took us an hour, and when we got there, we discovered that the lineup was very long. We would have liked a cab for our return to the ship, but after several unsuccessful attempts at flagging one down, we decided to walk all the way back. The weather was still great.

We really enjoyed the cabin. It was more spacious than we were used to because it was a cabin for three people with a fold-down bed on the wall. The beds were extremely comfortable and the linen was beautiful high-quality cotton. There were lots of hangers in the closet and lots of drawers for storage of clothes. That has not always been the case with our other cruise experiences. The shower was wonderful with the warm water coming out instantly after you have set the correct temperature. I heard others talking about that. It must save a lot of water for the cruise line. I wonder how they do that? It's not like home where we have to wait a while for the hot water to come from downstairs. We also had the sweetest cabin steward ever! Gladys from the Philippines always seemed happy to see us coming down the hall. I don't know how she got in and out so fast to keep the cabin continually clean for us.

The food service was also excellent. We like to have our breakfast and lunch at the Lido, and the selection was always great. The first day when we arrived, the waiter who hands out the plate and cutlery pointed at the disinfectant on the wall and smiled. They were very strict about everyone using that disinfectant for every meal, which is good because it's necessary to avoid people getting sick. At lunchtime, they always had a huge choice of wonderful cakes to try at the Lido. It was a real treat for us. One day they served sushi at the Lido. It was really impressive how they set it up. There was a huge dragon made of pineapples. There were two birds with lemon heads and apple bodies in a cage made of watermelon. There was an ice sculpture and a monkey with a fishing pole. Everybody was taking pictures. At dinnertime, we like to experience the total service of the dining room. Here the presentation was beautiful. Every plate came out looking like a piece of art. The portions were small, which we think is perfect. You want to try all the foods.

The onboard entertainment was also excellent. We particularly loved the production dancers, and so did everyone else. You had to arrive at least fifteen minutes before the show to get a decent seat. They danced to a full house twice each evening and put on four different shows during the ten-day cruise. Impressive! They supplemented the entertainment with a couple of comedians, a violin player, and lots of smaller bands and groups that played every day at various venues around the ship. Every evening as we went to dinner, there was someone playing the white piano on deck five in the atrium. It really added to the ambience. Alan and Alana were on deck seven in the atrium at other times. They supplemented their singing and playing with trivia time every evening and it was full! Probably the most festive and fun evening was the evening of the champagne waterfall. I have never seen that before because I haven't been on a Princess cruise. Everyone was there, and the presence of lots of young, energetic staff on the dance floor added to the festivities. It was very lively and fun.

We loved St. John, Halifax, Sydney, and Quebec City. There's so much of historical interest in these places, and the tours we chose were great. Our St. John tour guide told us they have lobster hamburgers at Macdonald's in the summertime. Boston and Newport were good too, but we didn't feel that Port Saguenay was worthwhile. It's a poor and depressing place with a high unemployment rate. It seemed that every tour went to the little white house that survived the flood of 1996, but it was an uninteresting 45-minute drive away, and it took only five minutes to have a look. Our tour also included a visit to the pulp mill – outside only – too bad! And the tour guide, Pierre – a retired teacher, was a Quebec separatist! He shouldn't be telling people that while on tour. St. John, Halifax, and Sydney had wonderful sail-away music. Sydney had a seven-man brass band and a singer with a voice like Rita MacNeil. They had a huge repertoire.

All in all, you can't go wrong with a cruise. Where else can you have the comfort of returning to your own bed every evening while visiting a completely new place each day and enjoying the best food and service anywhere on this earth? Now, if we could just learn to adjust to all the new rules about not carrying fluids in your hand baggage while flying. I totally forgot that cans of pop also contain fluids. Silly me!

Thanks so much for getting us a really great price on this cruise and the flights. Of course, we now realize that the reason it was so cheap was because the leaves were already off the trees that late in October. But the cruise was still excellent even though the weather was pretty cold in the end.

Sincerely  
Annette Lauridsen