

Cargo carriers offer low prices to travelers

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It makes room for 66 passengers willing to trade cruise ship amenities for the rare opportunity to spend 14 days cruising the remote Marquesas — the island chain farthest from any continent.

Renowned for their spectacular volcanic landscapes, unusual archaeological sites, artistic heritage and friendly people, the Marquesas are one of Polynesia's most appealing destinations.

Aratuli calls at six islands where passengers watch cargo operations, a spectacle in itself, or join guided excursions (included in the cruise price) to pristine beaches, verdant

mountains valleys and ancient temples.

Cabins are small and spartan but air-conditioned; some include toilet and shower. The dining room serves three hearty meals a day, family style. A sun deck sports a small salt-water pool.

Fares range from \$169 to \$220 per day, expensive by freighter standards but a giant vacation value in pricey French Polynesia. If you're willing to sacrifice comfort and privacy you can reserve space on the covered aft deck for \$50 a day, including mattress, meals and shore excursions. Perhaps the romance of freighter travel isn't dead after all.

The current per diem range of \$75 to \$150 for most freighters is about half of what you'd pay for space on a typical cruise ship.

For more information, write to Compagnie Polyestienne de Transport Maritime, 595 Market St., #2880, San Francisco, CA 94105, or call (415) 541-0677.

• The Narvik serves up scenery of a more Nordic nature. It's one of the newest and largest members of

an 11-ship coastal steamer fleet serving the fjord-slashed coast of Norway.

For nearly a century, this family of sturdy, versatile ships has carried cargo, mail and people from Bergen in the south to Kirkenes in the north on a 12-day round-trip run, calling at

35 different ports.

Although it can accommodate as many as 316 passengers in 164 modest cabins, Narvik is far too unassuming to take on the airs of a cruise ship. She more often resembles a ferry, carrying up to 40 vehicles and hundreds of short-hop passengers.

Cliff-lined fjords, brightly painted fishing villages, rocky islands and forest-clad mountains line the way as Narvik churns a serpentine course along one of the world's most spectacular coasts, more than half of it lying north of the Arctic Circle.

Brief stops, often as short as 45 minutes, don't leave much time for

land-roving but optional excursions, offered whenever the ship makes an extended call.

Summer fares range from \$112 to \$220 per day, less from October through May. For more information, write to Bergen Line, 505 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10017, or call (800) 323-7436.

For information on freighter travel, contact your travel agent. Several freighters can be booked through Freighter World Cruises Inc., 180 S. Lake Ave., #335, Pasadena, CA 91101, (800) 449-3106, or through Cruise and Freighter Travel Association, P.O. Box 188, Flushing, NY 11358, (800) 872-8584.

Woman enjoys skipping town, vacationing on big freighters

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"Most passenger freighters are limited to 12 passengers or less, so we soon became a family. We had 19 days together on the open sea before we reached Hong Kong. By the time we passed Singapore and got to Australia, we didn't want to get off."

Kathy had visited Australia by air once before, when her father was temporarily stationed there, but it was a lonely life for a single woman in the far western city of Perth.

She had an interesting job, organizing a blood bank, but two years later found another freighter and came home, via Tahiti.

"Have you been to Tahiti?" she asked.

"No."

"Don't bother," she said. So much for that exotic getaway.

It was 1987 before she did it again, sailing four months from Seattle to India on an American freighter. "This time I got a leave of absence, and after three and a half months I decided I'd better come home before I lost my job."

She's still traveling, but at the moment she's doing short trips. Last

year, for example, she took her 85-year-old step-mother up the Yangtze River in China aboard the cruise ship Ocean Pearl. But she hasn't given up freighters. She gets a freighter newsletter every month and is working on her next itinerary.

"What I like about freighters is that you can really get away from the world. I don't like crowds. It's better with just a few people around so that I can really get to know them. I like to be free to do my own thing, with no planned activities."

"I like the beautiful large cabins on a freighter and all the personal attention from officers and crew, including the captain. I like the quiet and the feeling of togetherness of the passengers."

"What kind of people would like freighter travel?"

"People who enjoy a leisurely life, looking out to sea, making their own fun in small groups. People who like a quiet life, although it isn't always quiet. Lively people have lively times and lots of parties. You can do whatever you want, or can talk other passengers into."

What do you do every day?

"Often I got up before breakfast to walk a mile or so on deck. I took a big history book aboard to improve my mind, but unless I read it first thing in the morning I never had time."

"Every day I wrote in my journal. The trip with elder passengers was much quieter than one with younger passengers. Older folk put puzzles together and went to bed at 8:30 p.m. after the movie every night. The younger passengers had parties, played bridge, swam in the pool, stayed up half the night partying with officers and crew."

"The two trips on Norwegian freighters were more fun than the one on the American freighter. The captain sets the trend. Norwegians were younger and more light-hearted than Americans. The American freighter made rules we had to follow, like not being allowed on the bridge, which is unheard of on other freighters." Kathy Wentz is presently the supervisor of the blood bank at Beaumont Hospital in Troy, but don't be surprised if one day soon she gets that look in her eye and starts packing again.

Choice abounds in freighter market

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"A true freighter traveler wants to do sea travel without all the stuff that goes on aboard cruise ships. Want to be on their own, don't mind reading a book or playing cards or enjoying life at sea without a cruise director."

According to Kirk, real freighter buffs don't buy the American or other large luxurious ships listed in our main article. Those ships are more attractive to people who have done some upscale cruising and want to try freighters.

Kirk will send you a free copy of

his pamphlet, 35 Most Commonly Asked Questions About Freighters. Travel and information about the newsletter TravLips. Write to 163-07 Depot Road, P.O. Box 188, Flushing, NY 11358. For reservations and \$15 a year membership, call toll-free (800) 872-8584.

Smaller ships find their way to adventure in exotic ports of call

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can identify every sound or smell, rock or reptile, you may encounter. Programs range from 10 to 30 days duration and prices for most fall between \$275 and \$450 per day.

• Yet another expedition ship, the 164-passenger Frontier Spirit, is due to begin service by year's end under the Salen-Lindblad banner.

A Lloyd's Super Ice Class rating will enable the vessel to cruise the Arctic and ever-popular Antarctic in direct competition with Society Expedition ships. Ironically, enough, the Frontier Spirit will be commanded by Captain Heinz Aye who steered Society vessels on 52 Antarctic voyages and two historic

navigations of the Northwest Passage during a 16-year career with the company.

Visits to exotic destinations worldwide will be enhanced by a dozen motorized landing craft plus scuba and snorkel facilities. Expedition prices average about \$245 per day.

• With three of its eight 100-passenger luxury mini-cruisers now in the water, Renaissance Cruises is finding an active market among what its president, Mark Conroy, describes as a "discriminating, intellectually curious clientele" — seasoned cruisers who fit somewhere between the explorer set and the champagne-and-caviar crowd.

To satisfy this niche group, Con-

roy said Renaissance is emphasizing "destination-oriented cruises, wrapped in luxury and enhanced by in-depth onboard lectures and high-quality shore excursions."

Once all eight of its matching, yacht-like Italian-built vessels with the same name — Renaissance I, II, III, etc. — are in service, sometime in early 1992, the Norwegian-owned line will offer a roster of itineraries that span the globe, calling on nearly 200 of the world's most exotic and unusual ports.

Renaissance Cruises' destination focus is supported by modular scheduling that allows passengers to combine itineraries.

travel notes

The Redford Travelers are offering a trip to the Oregon coastline July 10-16 for \$979. A slide presentation preview will be 12:30 p.m. Thursday, April 4, at Redford Community Center, 12121 Hemingway at Capital. For information, call Millie from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. 937-1984. GRAND TRAVERSE RESORT

The Grand Traverse Resort starts its spring lineup this week with the

April 5-6 Antique Show Weekend. April 19-20 a treasure hunt, May 4-5 and June 1-2, Orvis Fly Fishing School, May 24-26 Memorial Day Getaway, May 31-June 1 Bird Watcher's Weekend.

Guests will get one free hour of tennis-court time to 18 holes of golf during each stay April 19 through May 30. For more information, contact Dave Waskiewicz at (616) 938-2100.

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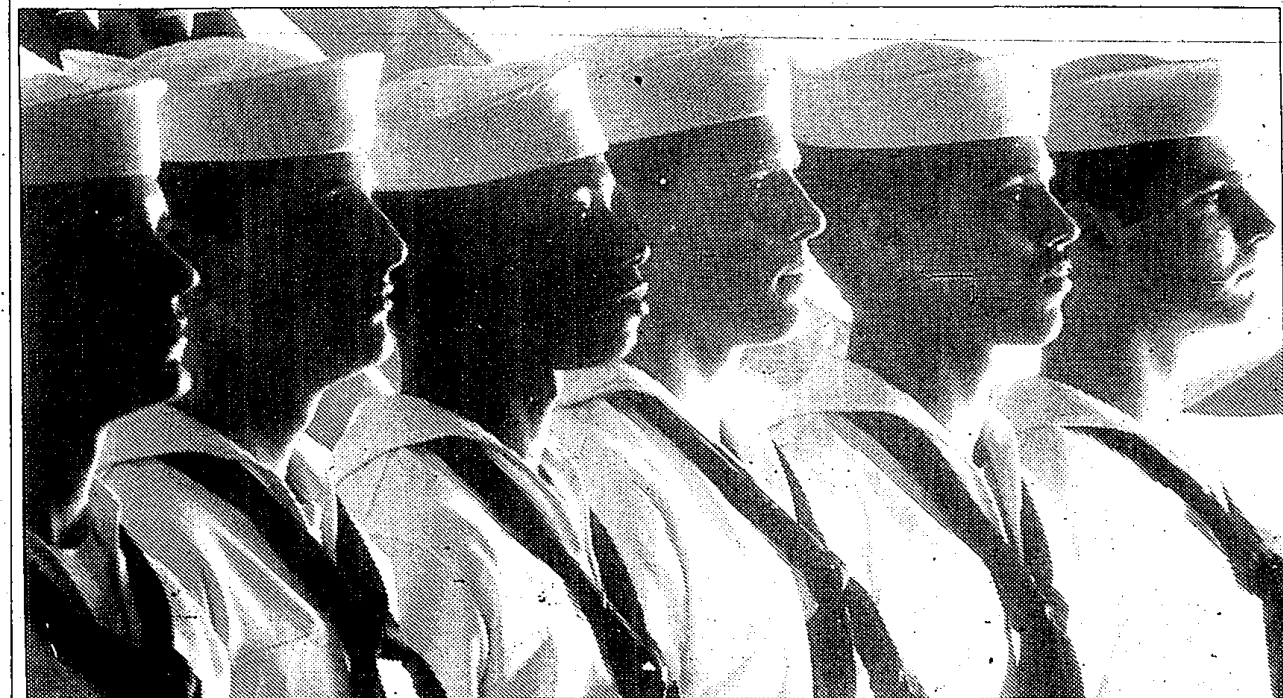
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