

TRAVEL

Fine setting: The Centrum is the focal point for the activity aboard the 2,354-passenger *Majesty of the Seas*, part of the Royal Caribbean Cruise Line.



Cruising makes everyone first class

BY BETTY SWARTZ
SPECIAL WRITER

Whip off the winter coats and snow boots and don your sun bathing attire — picture yourself relaxing and inhaling the balmy breezes of the sea while on a cruise. February, National Cruise Vacation month, is here, enlightening the public about the pleasures of cruising.

Gone are the "olden" days of sailing where there was a class distinction on every ocean liner — first, second and sometimes third class categories. A definite barrier existed onboard between the very rich and the not-so-rich. Today, cruising is for everyone and everyone is treated in a first-class fashion. It doesn't matter if you have chosen the least expensive cabin or the most expensive suite on a ship — all will be serviced and pampered like the rich and famous.

GREAT ESCAPES

Great Escapes features various travel news items. Send news to Hugh Gallagher, assistant managing editor, *Observer & Eccentric Newspapers Inc.*, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150, or fax them to (313) 591-7279.

Cruise ships today offer the ultimate vacation that at one time may have been only a dream. This year there are eight new ships scheduled to debut — these, plus the ones that entered the market last year and the ones on the drawing boards, all claiming to have the latest in this and that, are being built to accommodate the 92 percent of North Americans who have never cruised.

The list of new innovations goes on and on, to the point that ships of today are beyond one's imagination. Experience spa therapies, fitness programs, computer rooms and the latest onboard technology; passengers can book shore excursions, order room service and even have a hand in the cabin actions right from their cabin. One new ship coming out will have a golf club with a putting green and golf

simulator and a visual-reality arcade. We can only be awed by what the year 2000 may hold.

The bygone era of cruising, where formal attire was the appropriate dress for every dinner and being "properly dressed" for daytime activities was the norm, has been replaced by the casual and comfortable attire of today. Yes, formal nights are still on the agenda (two formal nights on a seven-day cruise), but also available is the alternative dining option — a casual restaurant that one can choose instead of "dressing up." Daytime wear is whatever pleases you (no bathing suits in the dining room) — just like a land resort vacation.

Recall seeing "nannies" pictured on the ocean liners of yesterday? Today, the children are busily engaged in special pro-

grams directed by qualified youth counselors on just about every ship. Many include computer hi-tech activities oriented toward children. Evening programs for children are usually available — if not, baby-sitting services are generally available for a nominal fee.

The cruise industry is aware of the wants and needs of today's passengers; hence, all of the numerous enhancements in today's world of cruising are geared to the lifestyle of the '90s. Don't let the opportunity of cruising pass you by — get on board and "see what's out at sea!"

Betty Swartz is a cruise counselor at Cruise Selections Inc. in Troy. She can be reached at (248) 643-6868 or check out her computer site at <http://www.cruiseselections.com>.

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"Cruise Night" will focus on Carnival Cruise Line's Sensation's Oct. 17, 1998, cruise. Admission is free. For reservations and more information, call (734) 397-9870.

SHANTY DAYS

Casville is holding its Shanty Days, Feb. 20-22. This winter festival features a polar bear dip, ice rescue demonstration, magic show, demo derby, hayrides, snow golf, chili cookoff, ice fishing and other events. For more information, call the Casville Chamber of Commerce at (800) 606-1347.

HONEYMOON CHOICE

A recent survey by Modern Bride magazine has named the Carnival Cruise Lines the best cruise value for honeymooners. The publication's first-ever "Travel Agent Honeymoon Survey" asked more than 3,000 honeymoon specialists their opinions regarding cruise lines, hotels, resorts, vacation destinations and various other travel-related categories. The result was featured in the December 1997/January 1998 issue of Modern Bride.

BLOCKBUSTER ART SHOWS

Robert and Rita Pniowski of CruiseOne Inc. will present a "Cruise Night" at Westland Bowl 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 19. The

Two major art shows will open in Toronto this June, both on loan from British institutions, the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Courtauld Institute of Art. Each will offer timed admissions for entry.

More than 70 Impressionists and Post-Impressionists masterpieces will be on view at the Art Gallery of Ontario, June 10 to Sept. 21 from the Courtauld. The exhibit will feature works by Monet, Degas, Cezanne, van Gogh, Gauguin, Seurat and others.

The Royal Ontario Museum will present "A Grand Design: The Art of the Victoria and Albert Museum," a sweeping exhibition of paintings, sculpture, design, fashion and decorative arts, June 21 to Sept. 13. The exhibit features such items as a Da Vinci notebook, a Dickens' manuscript and furniture by Chippendale and Macintosh.

For more information on Toronto, call Tourism Toronto at (800) 363-1990.

WORLD TRAVEL 101
Hostelling International-American Youth Hostels World Travel 101-Budget Travel workshop will be held 1:30-3:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 28, at 3024 Coolidge, Berkley.

Workshop will feature information on how to plan and prepare for your trip abroad, what and how to pack, where to stay and how to get around when you get there.

Council of Hostelling International-American Youth Hostels. No charge for the workshop but reservations are required. Call (248) 545-0511 for more information.

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We want to hear from you? Have you been someone interesting? Have you had a special adventure? Is there a quiet island you'd like to recommend or a highly promoted place you'd like to warn against? Do you have special tips for other travelers to make their journeys easier? Have you met some interesting people in other countries that you'd like others to know about? We want to share your stories and your color pictures on our travel page.

Call Hugh Gallagher at 734-953-2118, or fax him at 734-591-7279 or e-mail him at hughgallagher@homecomm.net

CRUISE NIGHT

Robert and Rita Pniowski of CruiseOne Inc. will present a "Cruise Night" at Westland Bowl 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 19. The

result was a sweepstakes for honeymooners.

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BounceBack Weekend included in suite price. Subject to state and local laws. Kids 16 and under stay free in parents' or grandparents' room. Offer valid for 12-14 day Program valid Thursday through Sunday. Not valid for holidays, special events, or other promotional periods. Not valid at Hilton Hotels. Letter check-out is subject to payment of lowest available room rate. Rates are firm at time of reservation. Limited availability. Advance reservations required. Rates do not include tax or gratuities and do not apply to meetings, conventions, groups or other promotional offers and are subject to change without notice. The Hilton logo and script are registered trademarks of Hilton Hotels Corporation. ©1997 Hilton Hotels.

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