



July 15, 2017 Update – Group Cruise News



"Royal Princess" at Sea

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Welcome! This month I'm featuring comments from my old college buddy, Jon London, who with his wife Bess are extremely experienced cruisers. Earlier this year they enjoyed back-to-back Caribbean sailings of *Royal Princess* and *Celebrity Eclipse*, so were in a great position to provide some interesting and constructive comparisons between the two vessels. I'm indebted to good friends like Jon who are fully capable of providing different perspectives on their cruising experiences than my own.

"I remember that you mentioned that you would be interested in hearing what I thought of *Royal Princess*. The answer is that I liked it very much, even more than the *Celebrity Eclipse* which we cruised on the prior fourteen days (and I liked the *Eclipse* also).

"On the boards, I've seen comments about the size of *Royal's* staterooms. We had a standard balcony cabin that seemed well designed, quite adequate for our needs, and had a very large closet. The only negative was the balcony itself, which was considerably smaller than the one on the *Eclipse*. It was possible to face chairs outward on the *Celebrity* balcony; on the *Royal* they could only face sideways.

"Food was exceptionally good on the *Royal*. The Ocean Terrace offered small plates that included excellent lobster rolls at lunch on sea days. The pizzeria was convenient and very good. I found the food in the buffet to be varied and tasty. The only negative of the buffet was that it only had three serving lines. I liked *Celebrity's* approach of multiple stations, each with distinct fare, better. Food in the main dining room was good, but not exceptional. The servers there did their jobs professionally, but did not seem to exhibit the degree of warmth and hospitality that we experienced on *Celebrity* (or on *Holland America* either, for that matter).

"The *Royal* is the largest ship we've sailed, but it did not seem congested. The only exception was the first day following the boat drill when it took 45 minutes to get an elevator back to our cabin. Entertainment was great on both ships, but *Princess* takes the edge in this category. The *Royal* had three male singers who each deserved a national career, or at least a place on Broadway. Also, a two-piece pop group called "Rhapsody" performed each night in the atrium, and I found them to be the best such group I've ever seen. Also performing in the atrium nightly was the best piano entertainer I've ever enjoyed, and he was also the youngest, no more than 25 (usually these guys are in their fifties or sixties).

"Speaking of the atrium, it was very impressive. *Princess* has outdone itself here with the International Cafe, wine bar, and Ocean Seafood Terrace all surrounding it. We especially enjoyed the cappuccino and pastries in the International Cafe. All in all, we had a great time on both ships, and the two itineraries included a total of two days each on Aruba, Curaçao, and Bonaire, three of our favorite islands. We're booked on *Holland America's Westerdam* twenty-four days from Rome in August. Then we do a twenty-one day from Singapore next January that hopefully will finally get Bess to Bali. She's always wanted to go there, but fell ill on the day we visited aboard *Celebrity Millennium* in 2013."

CroisiEurope's new *African Dream*, which will begin sailing in December in Southern Africa, is currently being finalized on the Harare shipyard in Zimbabwe. This unique river vessel will be completed next month and will have to travel 1000 km. across the African savanna to reach its home port in Kasane, Botswana. Measuring 131 feet long by 26 feet wide, *African Dream* will be cut into two units for transportation on the only trailer in Southern Africa capable of supporting such a load. Cruising along what are reportedly the most beautiful bends of the Chobe and Zambezi Rivers, the company will be offering an exclusive 4-day/3-night cruise-safari, followed by a 5-day/4-night stay in its five-star Cascades Lodge which will include land-based safaris as well as a day at Victoria Falls. Facilities aboard *African Dream* include eight suites accommodating 16 guests, plus a panoramic restaurant, lounge bar and rooftop terrace serviced by eight crew members. A second ship is already planned for 2018. www.croisieurope rivercruises.com/