



January 18, 2018 Update – Group Cruise News



Holland America Line's "Maasdam" cruising in Milford Sound, New Zealand

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**Welcome!** Since we're now firmly anchored in a new year, I thought I'd briefly review the ten cruises, plus the other trips and activities that made 2017 a particularly memorable year for me...

**January:** *Celebrity Constellation* United Arab Emirates (Abu Dhabi and Dubai) and Oman "immersion" cruise (best cruise *itinerary* I experienced in 2017); American Bus Association annual Marketplace in Cleveland; *Norwegian Epic* Caribbean Cruise from Port Canaveral

**February/March:** National Tour Association annual TREX in St. Louis; Midwestern classical music symphony concert tour; visits to South Florida National Parks

**April:** *Koningsdam* trans-Atlantic cruise from Fort Lauderdale to Rome; visit to Paris and *Raymonde Marne* Canal barge cruise from Paris to Epemay

**May:** *Oosterdam* Alaska cruise from Seattle

**June:** Escorting a Southwestern National Parks tour for a consulting client

**June/July/August:** Working as a ticket taker for the Tri-City Dust Devils, a San Diego Padres farm club in the half-season Northwest ("A") League; attending the Bravo Vail, Aspen, Colorado, National Repertory Orchestra and Grand Teton Music Festivals; going whitewater rafting; visiting North Cascades and Glacier National Parks, Craters of the Moon National Monument and Hells Canyon National Recreation Area; volunteering part-time for the Army Corps of Engineers in the Visitor Center at Ice Harbor Lock and Dam on the Snake River

**September:** Touring Wisconsin, then continuing around the northern shore of Lake Superior and the eastern shore of Lake Huron in Ontario

**September/October:** *Norwegian Getaway* Baltic cruise from Copenhagen; *MSC Preziosa* repositioning cruise from Hamburg to Barcelona; visiting Barcelona during the height of efforts to separate Catalonia from Spain; *Wind Surf* Spain and Morocco cruise from Barcelona to Lisbon (best cruise *ship* I experienced in 2017); visiting Amsterdam

**November:** *Safari Voyager* adventure cruise from San Jose along the Pacific Coastal parklands and preserves of Costa Rica and Panama, concluding with a canal transit (see my "Changing Horizons" column in the January issue of *The Group Travel Leader*)

**November/December:** 15-day tour of China with Sinorama Holidays, including a four-night Yangtze River Cruise aboard *Gold 3* (see my "Changing Horizons" column in the February issue of *The Group Travel Leader*); National Tour Association annual TREX in San Antonio

The past year *did* have its ups and downs, and life *has* surely been interesting lately, but I won't go into further detail here. Now it's a *new* January, and I've just completed an excellent, two-week *Maasdam* New Zealand and Australia cruise from Auckland to Sydney, which will be featured in the March/April issue of *Select Traveler* magazine. And on Sunday, I'm embarking on yet another two-week sailing, a *Celebrity Millennium* Asia cruise from Singapore through Thailand and Vietnam to Hong Kong. Readers who have any questions or wish more information about any of the experiences I've listed above are welcome to e-mail me at [bobho52@aol.com](mailto:bobho52@aol.com). Happy travels!

CroisiEurope has announced its latest canal barge itinerary, a seven-day/six-night program departing from Paris and traveling along the Petite Seine through Evry, Melun and Saint Mammes. With several on-shore excursions incorporated, travelers will have the opportunity to explore Paris as well as visit two of France's most famous châteaux... Fontainebleau and Vaux-le-Vicomte... as well as wander the medieval town of Troye, and enjoy a champagne tasting. Prices start at \$3,175 and includes all meals served on board and drinks from the bar, excursions listed in the itinerary, travel insurance and port fees. Departure dates are October 6, 13, 20 and 27, 2018, plus the itinerary will also be available during September and October, 2019, with exact departure dates to be announced. In other news, the line is also introducing a new extended Loire River itinerary for 2018, "Chateaux of the Loire Valley." This new program features a *Loire Princesse* cruise combined with visits to both Château de Chambord and Château de Chenonceau, plus an overnight stay in Paris. Prices for this seven-day program start at \$2,417 per person, with multiple departures dates available from April to October, 2018. The six-day cruise is round-trip from Nantes and visits Saint Nazaire, Ancenis, Angers and the Châteaux of the Loire Valley. Highlights include a full-day excursion through the Loire-Château d'Ussé, Château d'Azay-le-Rideau and the gardens at the Château de Villandry; a helicopter ride over the Loire Valley; wine tasting in the cellar of the Château de Brissac; exploring Nantes and its secret courtyards and passages; a tour of the Saint-Nazaire shipyard; plus the Muscadet Wine Route. [www.croisieurope.com/](http://www.croisieurope.com/)