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Cruise Travel For Physical Fitness Or A Spa Vacation

By Mary Hanna

You really want to take a cruise but you also really want to go to a spa for physical fitness and maybe a little pampering. In the world today you can do both. Years ago you were lucky to find a spa on a cruise ship. If there was one, it was in a really remote area of the ship. As for physical fitness there was very little equipment and most of it was tired. When people started to become more conscious of their looks and health the cruise lines revised their way of thinking. Cruise travel now can double as a spa vacation as well as learning a new physical fitness program.

The newer cruise ships have gone to great lengths to accommodate the cruise passenger who also wants to beautify and tone up. The cruise lines have installed state of the art equipment, added numerous exercise classes, and offer the newest beauty treatments available. Many of the cruise lines have relocated their fitness centers to the top decks of the ships with lots of windows so you can have a view while you are on the treadmill, bike, or lifting weights. Tucked up into the corner is a big TV so you can watch the news from back home. The cruise ships now have three distinct areas, one for fitness, one for spa treatments and one for the beauty salon.

As mentioned, the fitness centers on cruise ships are now a thing to behold. They all will definitely have treadmills, Stairmasters, free weights rowing machines and bikes. Some cruise lines even have complete Nautilus machines. Popular exercise machines, especially on sea days, may require you to sign up for a particular time of day and will limit the amount of time you can use the machine.

If you want to use your cruise travel as a vehicle to start an exercise regime there are physical trainers onboard. Their services, however, will cost you extra. The trainer will ask you lots of questions about your health and diet and then will come up with a personal regime for you. He or she will then book times through the week for you to work together.

All cruise lines offer exercise classes, yoga, aerobics, dance, water aerobics, even Pilates and kickboxing. Some of these may require a slight fee. To find out when these classes are held consult your daily bulletin for times and fees, if any.

Now, you're thinking why would I start a physical fitness regime while on a cruise ship, especially since

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they serve all that food, 24 hours a day? Well along with the newer, shinier and better facilities the cruise lines have also instituted what they call spa cuisine. Everyday they will offer a "lighter side" menu if you are really serious about your new physical fitness regime.

Don't assume that if the ship is older, it won't have a decent fitness and spa area. Check with your cruise travel agent to find out what facilities are onboard the cruise ship you have chosen. For instance, the QE2 is an older ship but it has a beautifully outfitted spa with a large staff. Celebrity's slight older Century has a Thalassotherapy pool for their passenger's enjoyment and it has become quite popular among their cruisers.

When you board your cruise ship go to the spa area. Usually on the first day the staff will be explaining their treatments and occasionally demonstrate how it is done. Sometimes they will raffle off treatments, so go to the demonstration just for that reason. If you have definitely decided that you will be doing some treatments, book them on day one to get the best times. Any beauty salon

appointments should be made then too, hair appointments for formal night go very quickly.

Many times the spa and beauty staff will discount their services on days when the ship is in port. If you are going to a few cruise destinations that you have previously visited, take advantage of these offers. You will find that you can pick your time of day to get these treatments done with little or no competition. If you are an early riser, choose an appointment in the morning and then get off the ship to enjoy that port. Or, conversely, disembark early to explore your new port, and then return to the ship in the early afternoon to take advantage of a discounted treatment.

When you go to your spa appointment, do not wear jewelry or fancy clothes. Most treatments are a bit messy and you don't want to ruin any of your belongings. It is best just to wear a robe. When you get there an attendant will give you a towel and a private locker to put away your things. You may then be asked to wait in a room. Your technician will come out to take you to the room designated for that particular application. You will also fill out a form on your health and any surgeries that you have had. The room you are in will most likely have a shower. It will definitely have a sound system to play soothing music and there will be an array of exotic oils and creams.

The cruise ship spas have gotten quite creative. They now offer couples massages where you and your partner are in the same room with different massage therapists. Then there are four hand massages where two people work on you at the same time. Some of the cruise lines offer in suite massages and some even have massages on the deck.

By far the highest percentage of staff are women but there are a few men. If you have a preference between male or female spa technicians, state it when you make your appointment. Some people are uncomfortable lying naked on a table with a therapist of the opposite sex. Check the cruise ship's policy on tipping. Some cruise lines automatically tack on a 15% charge to your bill while on others you may have to pay in cash. To save embarrassment, check at the time you make your appointments.

There are three lines that allow you to make your spa appointments before boarding the ship. Princess,

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Windstar and Celebrity all offer this option. In some cases they even have packages that you can book in advance. Be careful here though, they may give you some very early morning appointments which means you have to go and change them on the very first day. This is not the best policy since they should be giving you prime appointments for booking ahead.

Beauty salons will offer a full array of services. You can have your nails done, your hair colored or hand and foot treatments aside from just a trim. Most of the beauty salons have European staffs. That is not necessarily a bad thing. Places like Austria require their beauty students to go to the equivalent of our college.

See, it is possible to turn your cruise into a spa vacation or physical fitness week. Just follow what your trainer or your beauty technicians tell you and eat the spa cuisine. You've just achieved three goals, a little bit of pampering, a fitness regime, and a light and healthy diet. This may be a new way for you to view cruise travel.

Happy Cruising!

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Mary Hanna has traveled the world by Air and Ship while writing eBooks, Software Reviews and Practical Articles on Internet Marketing, Cruising, Gardening and Cooking. Visit her websites at:

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Cruises Are Just More Fun!

By Thomas DeSimone

Cruise Industry at a Glance.

–The choice of taking a cruise vacation is the fastest growing choice of the travel industry – reaching more than 1,800% growth since 1970, when an estimated 1/2 million travelers took a cruise. Today more than 11 million people took a cruise vacation in 2005.

–The cruise sectors growth is also shown in its expanding guest capacity. About 40 new ships were

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assembled in the 1980s and during the 1990s, nearly 80 new ships have been introduced. By the end of 2005, about 69 new ships have been introduced since 2000.

–This fast growth has ignited the continuing trend of the cruise vacation experience. Over the years, cruise liners have modified itineraries to include more diverse ports of call and convenient embarkation ports and have also introduced many onboard amenities and facilities, including Internet cafes, ice–skating rinks, multiple themed restaurants and expansive spas, health and fitness facilities.

–The cruise industry's commitment to adding new capacity is based in part on cruising's promising growth potential. Because majority of U.S. adults have never taken a cruise vacation, there remains a virtually untapped sector of the travel industry.

–Cruise lines cater to a wide variety of demographic mix. Cruisers range from 50 years of age, with above–average annual household income. Cruise vacations attract travelers from every state in the nation and from every province in Canada. The states catering to the most cruise passengers are Florida, California, Texas, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Illinois, Arizona and Georgia.

–With hundreds of destinations to choose from, no matter what vacation mood you're in cruises offers a wide variety of destinations for everyone! From the icebergs of Alaska to the hot sands of Mexico. With the world's top cruise lines at your fingertips finding your dream cruise is easy.

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