



Travel

Experience “180 Degrees from Ordinary”

By Mira Temkin



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I'm a big fan of Windstar Cruises. I like the intimacy of the smaller ships, (Wind Surf carries only 308 passengers), the casual, laid back attitude and relaxed, yet elegant atmosphere. I like that there's no assigned seating at dinner, that you can dine when and with whom you want. And, there's no formal dress code. I never felt crowded or rushed anywhere on the ship. And with more than one crew member for every two people, I felt truly indulged in endless pampering.

Luxurious New Amenities

Having sailed on Wind Surf several years ago, I was really pumped to see their newest amenities. They call it “degrees of difference” and these enhancements made the voyage even more spectacular. Walking into my stateroom, I was still impressed with its size as well as its functional design....storage spaces were everywhere! A flat panel LCD television and DVD player impressed me even more, as did the extensive DVD collection in their library that rivals Blockbuster!

Windstar has added Sealy Posturepedic Premium Plush Euro-Top mattresses and luxurious Egyptian cotton bed linens. Couple that with the gentle lull of the sea and I slept somewhere between heaven and earth! And they've supplied all the staterooms with Shea Butter L'Occitane en Provence products, which has now turned me into a firm believer of these marvelous bath rituals.



You might think that people on vacation would want to get away from it all, including technology, but Windstar has found that people like to stay connected. In response, Windstar has added a host of high-tech amenities. Apple iPod Nanos loaded with a broad selection of music may be checked out, with their compliments. Bose SoundDocks are in each stateroom and personal laptops can be rented, plus wireless connectivity is now available in all public areas. No need to miss any email!

Dining at Sea with Celebrity Chef Joachim Splichal

Windstar has had a long-standing relationship with acclaimed Chef Joachim Splichal who has created Windstar's Signature Cuisine. Onboard Wind Surf, there are two dining rooms, Le Bistro with its new steak house menu and The Restaurant. Making a dramatic impression to the table is the new Riedel stemware and stunning turquoise chargers. Something I really enjoyed every night was the “amuse bouche,” or “little bite” before dinner, compliments of the chef, like a fig stuffed

with Gouda. With more than 100 new items, the menu boasts such eclectic choices as spicy tomato soup, butter poached chicken breast and hazelnut crusted grouper. The Caribbean Night Buffet introduced me to a world of new tastes like honey ginger marinated duck and mango salad. And of course, there are always “Sail Light” menus, offering healthy options at every meal, even dessert!



Now I'm Cooking!

Here was an opportunity to do something different! Executive Chef Henri Lemay shared his culinary skills with passengers in a “hands on” cooking class. About 18 of us gathered in the dining room and with all of the ingredients laid out, we made crabcakes with pineapple-papaya salsa. I even

aboard Windstar Cruises

learned the right way to cut an onion...who knew? We combined all the ingredients and watched Chef Henri skillfully shape the cakes and fry them. Afterwards, we toasted to our success with a glass of Chardonnay!



Unwinddddddd....

Windstar takes relaxation seriously and offers a full range of spa services. Trained therapists from all over the world employ the newest massage techniques, guaranteed to remove all traces of your 9-5 work week. Treatments like the Aromaspa Ocean Wrap cocoons guests in seaweed to energize the entire body. I opted for Chakra Stone

Therapy and practically floated back to my stateroom. But no, it was 4:00 p.m. and time for tea at the Compass Rose Lounge, my favorite time of day. Dare I miss those little sweet treats? Windstar even takes the spa experience outdoors at their special "BBQ on the Beach," where you can indulge in a relaxing massage.

Round-Trip from Barbados and Beyond

My 7-day Wind Surf cruise sailed round trip from Barbados, calling on Nevis, St. Marten, St. Bart's, Guadeloupe, Isle des Saintes and St. Lucia. Other Wind Surf itineraries sail round trip from St. Thomas. One of the advantages of sailing on a smaller ship is that it can dock in smaller ports that the larger ships simply cannot access, giving you a glimpse of Caribbean life you won't see anywhere else. This is one of the reasons so many guests return to Windstar time after time. Yes, several guests I met had sailed with Windstar on more than seven cruises...I'm hoping to join them!

Through 2006 and 2007, Windstar ships will sail romantic itineraries and exotic locales in the Mediterranean, Greek Islands, Caribbean, Costa Rica and the Panama Canal. Windstar's Greek Isles cruises have become so popular, they've increased the number of offerings and added new islands. With three motor sailing yachts, the Wind Surf, the 148-passenger Wind Star and Wind Spirit, Windstar Cruises is known for pampering without pretense and their ability to visit the hidden harbors of the world's most treasured destinations. For information and reservations, call 1.800.258.7245 or visit www.windstarcruises.com

Mira Temkin is a North Shore freelance writer specializing in advertising, promotional marketing and public relations. As a travel journalist, her skills have taken her across Europe and the Caribbean. In addition, she is Editorial Consultant for Suburban Woman North Shore and Chicago Suburban Woman newspapers. She can be reached at 847-433-2109.



My Favorite Port – St. Lucia

Lush, mist covered mountains, cascading waterfalls and amazing rainforests accented with hues of flowers, St. Lucia remains an undiscovered paradise. The "trademarked" and world famous twin peaks of the Pitons soar 2000 feet up from the sea, while boiling lakes remind visitors of the islands' volcanic origins. Birds of paradise, exotic flowers and coconut trees envelope your senses. Although tourism is booming, much of the island remains unspoiled and natural.

What attracted me to St. Lucia was an opportunity to visit the Soufriere (Sulphur Springs) volcano, the world's only drive-in volcanic crater. Here we walked with a park guide to see pools of boiling mud and clouds of steam shooting some 50 feet in the air. Our guide told us that fresh rain water collects in the boiling crater where it's heated, saturated with minerals and runs down the mountainside into waterfalls. While the volcano hasn't erupted since 1755, you simply have to wonder about all that activity going on below the earth's surface. Standing in the middle of this crater was indeed, awe inspiring!

Throughout its history, St. Lucia has been inhabited by a unique melange of cultures which give it a fascinating charm. Open air markets, historical ruins, working plantations and beautiful beaches truly make St. Lucia a wondrous destination. If you're looking for unchartered territory, St. Lucia will make you feel like you've discovered Fantasy Island!

For more information about St. Lucia, visit www.stlucia.org.