

The Boston Globe

Travel

Themes infuse cruises with allures for newbies

By Neece Regis | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT FEBRUARY 10, 2013



JOE LIPPEATT

Dancing Moon Travel is sponsoring a seven-night Alaskan Photography Adventure on the ship Celebrity Solstice round-trip from Seattle.

As the cruise industry expands and grows, its one-size-fits-all vacation model is changing to include — and often feature — specialty theme cruises. From arts and education to dancing, sports, and offbeat cultural trends, those who never thought of themselves as “cruise people” might now be tempted to climb aboard.

BASEBALL GREATS MSC Cruises hits a home run hosting a series of

baseball-themed cruises in the eastern Caribbean aboard MSC Poesia. Each voyage features at least five baseball stars, including Cookie Rojas, Ken Griffey Sr., Stan Bahnsen, and Rico Petrocelli. Players host trivia games, question-and-answer sessions, and storytelling events. Hone your skills in pitching, hitting, and defense strategy clinics, and enter the passenger pitching contest. At the end of each cruise the players sign autographs. Round trip from Fort Lauderdale, Fla. Feb. 23, March 9, April 6. Rates from \$559 (February) and \$499. 877-665-4655, www.msccruisesusa.com/us_en/Cruise-Departures/Theme-Cruises/Baseball-Greats-Cruise.aspx

BARBIE PREMIUM EXPERIENCE Royal Caribbean International is partnering with Mattel to feature a Barbie cruise package for girls 4 to 11. Staterooms decorated in the doll's signature style feature keepsakes such as a Barbie doll and fashions, blanket and pillowcase, tote bag, toothbrush, and toiletries bag. Activities include a "Tiaras and Teacups" party, mermaid dance class, fashion design workshop, fashion show, and more. Available on Oasis of the Seas and Allure of the Seas, and on the rest of the fleet in March. Add-on package cost \$349. 866-562-7625, www.royalcaribbean.com/statichtmlpage.do?pagename=Barbie

"DANCING WITH THE STARS" Kick up your heels on one of Holland America Line's dancing cruises. Here's your chance to meet the dancers, take lessons, and enjoy performances starring the pros and celebrity competitors from the TV show, including two-time champions Mark Ballas and Kym Johnson, and Tristan MacManus and Lacey Schwimmer. Various dates and destinations: Feb. 16, MS Eurodam, seven-day eastern Caribbean; June 22, MS Veendam, seven-day Canada and New England; June 30 and July 7, MS Oosterdam, seven-day Alaska, and more. Rates depend on destinations. 2013 from \$899; 2014 from \$699. 877-932-4259, www.hollandamerica.com/pageByName/Simple.action?requestPage=DWTS

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STEAMPUNK Pack your best retro-futuristic Victorian duds and set sail on

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Royal Caribbean's Navigator of the Seas on the First Annual Steampunk Cruise and High Seas Ball. Billed as "Downtown Abby meets Jules Verne," this fast-growing genre of literature, fashion, music, and culture is best described as Victorian science fiction.

The seven-night trip departs from New Orleans and sails to Grand Cayman, Jamaica, and Cozumel, Mexico, March 16-23. Features author G.D. Falksen, music by This Way to the Egress, appearances by writer and puppeteer Mary Robinette Kowal, a Chrononauts Parade, a Great Mad Scientists Monologue Competition, film festival, vintage bathing suit contest, and more. Cabins for two from \$909 per person.

855-783-2600, www.steampunkcruise.com

ARCHEOLOGICAL TOURS Visit archeological sites while enjoying Sicily's rugged beauty on the Sicily, Malta, and the Aeolian Islands voyage, April 29-May 7, sponsored by the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA). Lecturer and host Albert Leonard Jr. leads the group on a circumnavigation of the islands, highlighting the ways that Greek, Roman, Arab, Norman, Christian, Jewish, Byzantine, and Muslim cultural experiences intermingle. All accommodations aboard the 290-foot Corinthian are suites with sea views, some with balconies. All AIA Tours small ship cruises anchor at ports and historic towns that larger ships cannot visit. Pricing from \$6,990 per person, double occupancy.

800-748-6262, www.archaeological.org/tours

WINE AND FOOD CELEBRATION Cruise Specialists, a luxury world cruise agency, offers six food and wine themed voyages aboard the intimate, 684-guest ships of Oceania Cruises. Designed to satisfy the most serious foodies and oenophiles, these 10- to 25-day voyages feature cooking classes and demonstrations in the Bon Appetit Culinary Center — with 24 hands-on work stations — plus wine seminars, tastings, and wine and food pairings run by wine specialists and growers. The executive culinary director for Oceania Cruises is Jacques Pepin. Voyages offered to Northern Europe, the Mediterranean, Panama

PHOTOS



Photos: Theme cruises

Canal, and South Pacific. The 20-day Grand Panama Canal cruise departs Lima May 6 and ends its journey in New York. Rates from \$4,589. Book by March 31: free air, 2-for-1 fares plus bonus savings. 800-544-2469, www.cruisespecialists.com/cruise-package-detail.aspx?packageId=2257

CALIFORNIA BEER FESTIVAL Head out to sea on May 6 for a nine-night coastal voyage from Ensenada, Mexico, to Seattle aboard the 2,850-passenger Celebrity Solstice. Hosted by Lagunitas Brewing Co. and a California brew master to be announced, the cruise features craft beer, live music, meet-the-brewer and home-brewing lessons, four-course craft beer and food pairing luncheon, and more. Optional brewery tours in San Diego, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, San Francisco, Astoria, Ore., and Victoria, B.C. Rates from \$999. 800-544-2469, www.cruisespecialists.com/cruise-package-detail.aspx?packageId=2187

NKOTB CRUISE 2013 Step aboard Carnival Victory and enjoy a music cruise with Boston's own famed '80's boy band New Kids on the Block. Offered by Rose Tours, the voyage sails round trip from Miami to Half Moon Cay and Nassau, May 18-22. Rates from \$899. Price includes all NKOTB events, cocktail party, meals, snacks, and complimentary room service. This cruise does not accept passengers under the age of 16. 888-491-7673, nkotbcruise.rosetours.com

BLUE HAWAII, AN ELVIS TRIBUTE Celebrate the life and music of Elvis Presley on a seven-night steamboat cruise on the Mississippi, May 19-26. Start rocking with a complimentary tour of Graceland in Memphis before boarding the grand American Queen, said to be the largest steamboat ever built. Rooms and accommodations are decorated in Victorian-era opulence with modern amenities. Between historic ports of call, including Vicksburg, Miss., and Baton Rouge, La., Elvis is commemorated onboard through stories and music. The voyage ends in New Orleans. Rates from \$2,495 double occupancy. Includes complimentary one-night hotel stay in embarkation city. 888-749-5280, www.americanqueensteamboatcompany.com/theme/blue-hawaii-elvis-tribute/

ALASKAN PHOTOGRAPHY ADVENTURE Grab your camera and board

this seven-night cruise to Alaska hosted by photographers Dennis Hammon and Cheri MacCallum. In addition to enjoying all the usual dining and activities onboard the Celebrity Solstice, guests participate in exclusive photo workshops and two locally guided photo excursions to the Mendenhall Glacier in Juneau and to the town of Haines and Chilkoot Lake. Offered exclusively by Dancing Moon Travel, the package also includes a scavenger hunt, bottle of sparkling wine, chocolate-covered strawberries, and more. Round trip from Seattle, departs June 28. Rates from \$2,484 per person. Non-photographer companion rates available. 404-913-4386, <http://Alaska.TheCruiseEvent.com>

SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN BRIGHT HORIZONS Relax your body as you expand your mind on an educational voyage arranged by Insight Cruises. Pairing content with media partners such as the Scientific American and The New York Times, these seven- to 10-day cruises offer lectures by leading authorities. On the Bright Horizons cruise to the Norwegian fiords on the Celebrity Infinity, July 5-15, lecture topics include Ships and Ship Building in the Viking Age, The Physics of Impossible Things, The Biology of Memory, and The Elusive Neutrino. Rates from \$2,169 plus conference fee of \$1,575 that includes all twenty 60- to 75-minute seminars. Educational trips to Southeast Asia, Patagonia, Rhone River, and more also available. 650-787-5665, www.insightcruises.com

VIRGIN ISLES NEW YEAR'S EVE Celebrate New Year's Eve sailing though the Caribbean aboard Windstar's casually elegant and intimate Wind Surf, a ship that carries just over 300 guests. San Francisco-based Olivia, a leader in lesbian travel celebrating its 40th anniversary, is sponsoring this weeklong "Ultimate Escape" setting sail from the Dutch side of St. Maarten, Dec. 28-Jan. 4. Ports of call include Antigua, Tortola, Virgin Gorda, and more. Includes a New Year's Eve party, evening entertainment, fine dining, and opportunities to snorkel, scuba, shop, or simply relax on burnished teak decks and pristine beaches. "Early Bird Booking Discount" expires July 1. Rates from \$3,998, solo passenger (shared cabin). 800-631-6277, www.olivia.com

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