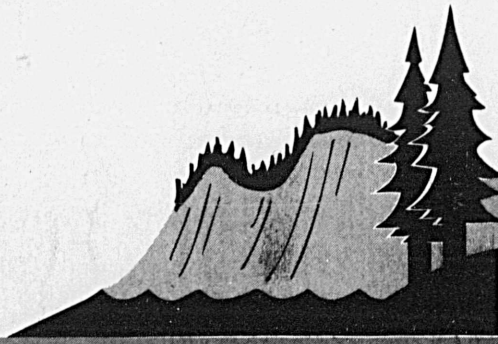
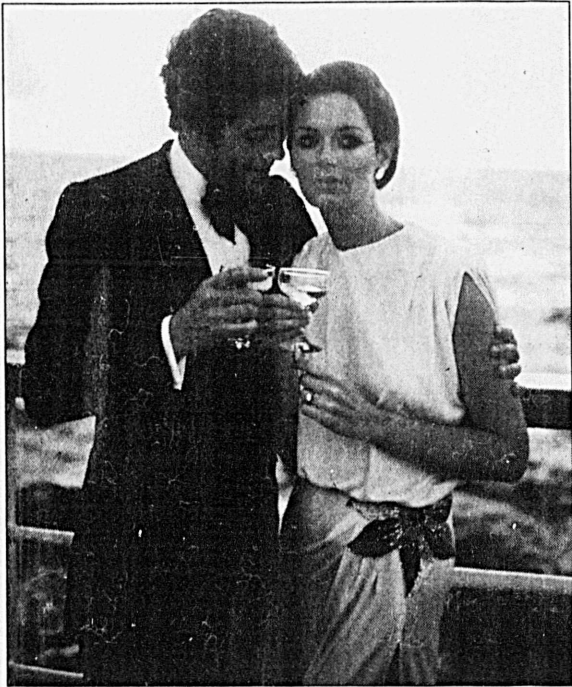


CRUISE VACATIONS



Nothing says romance like a cruise



**by WENDY McDONALD
For Southam Newspapers**

CALGARY - Whether you have some "Royal Caribbean Coming," want to sail on the "Funship," or are looking for a "Tradition of Excellence," cruising has become today's most popular, carefree, romantic vacation packed with extremely high quality for the money spent.

As a cruise enthusiast with several cruises behind me, I've noted that the majority of passengers are women. Why do you think this is so?

Research states that, when considering cruises, what most men are concerned with (in order of importance) are cost, seasickness, boredom, and confinement. They haven't clued in that a cruise could be wildly romantic!

Most women, on the other hand, notice immediately after embarkation that a weight is lifted from their shoulders. Jan Edwards of Seattle says, "Unpack once and enjoy the pampering; no dishes, no cleaning, and no waiting on others for a whole week! If that doesn't put you in an amorous mood, what will?"

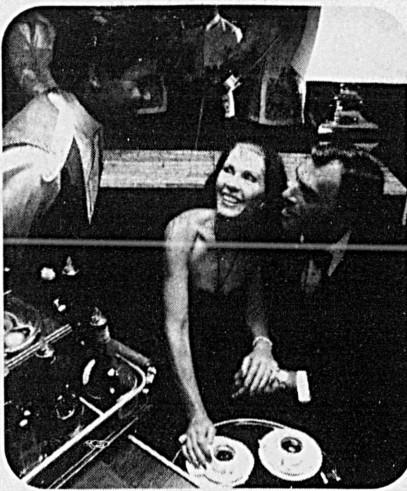
She and her husband John have been cruising for the past eight years, a second honeymoon every year. John says it puts spontaneity back into their marriage. "It's a hassle free vacation we look forward to every year."

Many cruise ships are 11 to 15 decks high and the length of two football fields. By the end of the cruise, you still won't have explored all the nooks, crannies, and romantic spots on board. It's a self contained city at sea where the scenery constantly changes. You have the opportunity of visiting different ports every other day.

Mike and Jill Dempsey liked how cruise lines handle in port shore excursions giving couples more intimate time together without worrying about how they're going to get here and there. "A real stress buster," Mike said.

Husbands and wives often complain of little energy left for each other after working all day plus catering to family and social needs. Research done by CLIA (Cruise Line Industry Association) says that people now have 40% less leisure time than they did in 1973. In response to demand, a number of cruise lines have added three-, four- and five-day cruises to their itineraries to make it possible for people with little time in their hectic lives to rejuvenate.

I've heard couples say, "When the children grow up and move



Cruising is becoming one of the steadiest growing areas of the travel industry and fun, food and romance goes right along with it.

away, we'll go on vacation together." But, by putting vitality in your love lives now, you're less likely to forget why you fell in love in the first place. Don't underestimate the power of a good vacation together - it's not only good for your mental health, it's good for your love life too.

On board Holland America's Statendam, I talked with several cruise ship passengers about romantic shipboard hang-outs. Here are the unforgettable activities and pastimes couples said they'll reminisce over for months afterward:

■ Dancing the night away at several nightclubs to a variety of live music. Whether you like ballroom dance, 50s and 60s jive, or line dancing, it's all there for you and only a floor or so away. Knock yourself out, and visit all in one night.

■ Strolling along the navigation deck under the stars inhaling the fresh scent of sea air, listening to the soothing sound of surf as the ship slices through the waves with ease. "But please don't try making love in one of the lifeboats," advises a couple who suffered the embarrassment of being caught on closed circuit TV.

■ Enjoying delectable six course dinners in an intimate suite setting or in the elegant dining room at a table for two. Ordering whatever you please from the mouth-watering selection of appetizers, soups, salads, entrees, and desserts. It's all included. Topping it off with a fine selection of wines and aperitifs. If you're planning an amorous evening, however, it's wise not to overeat.

■ The greatest aphrodisiac is just the two of you on your private veranda, with a warm breeze gently blowing, watching the sun shimmer off the ocean. "It's OK to make love on the veranda providing no one can see you," says Dr. Ruth Westheimer.

“Unpack once and enjoy the pampering; no dishes, no cleaning, and no waiting on others for a whole week! If that doesn't put you in an amorous mood, what will?”

Cruise popularity on the rise

Southam Newspapers

CALGARY - Think cruises are about shuffleboard, seniors and bingo bonanzas?

Well, think again. Try inline skating, Internet cafes and individualized menus.

Cruising has moved forward into the new century with larger ships, new innovations, and itineraries that are targeted to every age group and interest imaginable.

In 1970, a half-million North Americans took cruises. By 1998, that number had grown to 5.4 million.

And since 1998, cruising has grown each year by 8%, with similar growth predicted for the future, reports Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), an umbrella organization that represents 23 different cruise lines around the world.

Young adults between 25 and 40 represent the fastest-growing segment of the cruising population. And about 80% of cruises are taken by repeat passengers, reports CLIA.

Action in Alaska isn't just onboard

**by CAROL BAKER
For Southam Newspapers**

KETCHIKAN, Alaska - Kayaking around Ketchikan with kids young enough to be your grandchildren is an easy way to ignore aging, if only for an afternoon. And your heart and lungs will thank you.

Sure, cruising to Alaska aboard a Love Boat is great. I can endure pampering to perfection as well as anyone - bedside breakfasts watching the passing parade of majestic mountains through the porthole, Jacuzzis on the aft deck overlooking dolphins dancing on the waves, European dining service with alert and charming waiters, classy Las Vegas-style shows, and cocktails with the captain.

But, the real treasure of this marine highway north is the great outdoors.

While some cruisers sweep through countless souvenir shops, restlessness found me signing up for any excursion that sparked thoughts of the wilderness, no matter how wet the weather.

Kayaking in Ketchikan is one of various adventures ashore offered by most Alaska cruise companies. Often the first stop on the sea odyssey north to Alaska, Ketchikan claims three times as much rainfall as Vancouver. Little matter. I dressed warmly. And there were rainslickers and life jackets for everyone.



A visit to Alaska via cruise ship can include many off-ship adventures, including kayaking.

After a basic briefing on paddling, steering, and how to avoid overturning the two-seaters, and a five-minute practice session near the dock, we were off, paddling placidly around the huge hull of the 70,000 tonne Regal Princess. Talk about feeling small!

We glided into a marina of fishing boats and small pleasure craft back-dropped by the looming velvet green of Deer Mountain, and sat in our kayaks taking pictures and listening to a talk on the history and ecology of the coast.

We paddled up the creek to watch spawning salmon struggle upstream and die, rode the current around in a circle near the bridge, and took photos of old houses built on wooden stilts overhead as part of the local red-light district nearly a century ago.

Then our clutch of kayakers skimmed across sheltered Tongass Narrows to Pennook Island where bald eagles eyed us carefully.

All too quickly our three hours were up, and we had to head back to the dock to leave the kayaks and capes for the next batch of boaters.

Another activity to check out - and the easiest outdoor action - may be the Klondike bicycle tour in Skagway. A van transports cyclists to the top of White Pass, where tour escorts provide bikes, helmets, gloves, and rain gear.

What cruise line is right for you?

**by WENDY McDONALD
For Southam Newspapers**

With more than 600 cruise ships afloat, first-time cruisers may be confused as to what cruise line and ship to sail on.

You'll receive the most value from your cruise vacation if you let your travel agent/cruise consultant know up front what you like and don't like in a vacation. She can then look in the right direction and tailor a cruise that will suit your specific needs and lifestyle.

A selection of popular cruise lines that mass market their product include:

Carnival Cruise Lines

■ Known as the "Funship" fleet; good for families and singles but don't mix them together on three- or four-day cruises at times like Spring Break.

■ Average age: 25 to 45.

■ Formal evenings aren't as formal as on other cruise lines. Jacket and tie are not enforced;

just about anything goes except cut-offs.

Celebrity Cruises

■ Sophisticated travel experience with an upscale mind set.

■ Average age: 35 to 64.

■ Formal evenings are a big event.

Crystal Cruises

■ Luxury cruise experience for passengers accustomed to the best.

■ Average age: 42 to 70.

■ On formal evenings, many people wear tuxedos and evening gowns.

Norwegian Lines

■ First to launch theme cruises; ready for the young and restless: "It's Different Out There."

■ Average age: 30 to 55 (Baby Boomers).

■ Good family vacation; good children's programs.

■ Formal evening attire isn't written in stone; be comfortable.

Holland America Line

■ With more than 125 years service, a "Tradition of Excellence" is what you can expect.

■ Average age: 45 to 65.

■ Formal evenings are for continuity; you'll see everything from tuxedos to three-piece polyester suits.

Princess Cruises

■ Expect a traditional cruise experience with extra detail given to make the cruise more luxurious.

■ Average age: 40 to 60 (No children under 18 months).

■ In-depth children's program.

■ On formal evenings a tie is a must.

Royal Caribbean

■ Great experience for singles, young families, and couples.

■ Average age: 25 to 54.

■ Formal evening attire is flexible; some dress to the nines, others dress more business-like.



A water-slide and hot tub are just too of the many features that Carnival Cruise Lines offers on its various ships.

NORWEGIAN CRUISE LINE

Ship / Itinerary	Inside from	Oceanview from
S/S Norway from Miami* 7- night Eastern Caribbean, Feb 26 - May 20/00	\$869	\$1014
Norwegian Sky from Miami* 7- night Eastern/ Western Caribbean, Feb 27 - April 9/00	\$1087	\$1304
Norwegian Sea from Houston* 7- night Western Caribbean, Feb 27 - May 21/00	\$869	\$1014
Norwegian Dream from San Juan* 7- night Southern Caribbean, Mar 5 - April 2/00	\$1014	\$1087

* Most Departures

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