

Cruise Critic Announces Hot Cruising Trends for 2008

Top 10 list highlights outstanding cruise ports that should not be missed in 2008

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Thinking about taking a cruise in 2008 to explore the coast of China or the Greek islands? How about hopping onboard a luxury cruise ship that caters to your every whim? If you are considering any of these cruise vacations, you are not alone. According to Cruise Critic(R) (<http://www.cruisecritic.com/>), the world's leading online resource for consumer-oriented cruise reviews and news, increased interest in European and Asian itineraries as well as luxury cruising are some of the hot cruising trends in 2008.

"Along with the increased popularity and availability of Asian and European cruises, other '08 trends we are seeing include a greater number of fitness & spa themed cruises and the building out of new ports of call in the Caribbean," said Carolyn Spencer Brown, editor in chief, Cruise Critic. "For travelers planning to cruise in 2008, being aware of these trends provides valuable insight into new and expanding onboard activities and other potential cruise itineraries, opening up entirely new vacation possibilities!"

2008 Cruise Trends

Europe is Booming

Because of the popularity of Europe-based cruising and the need to alleviate gridlock at the busiest ports, in 2008, cruise lines are offering more exotic itineraries than ever before. Some of these new European itineraries will include ports of call along Croatia's coast or around the Black Sea. Also, in the past, Europe has been more of a warm weather cruise destination. Looking at 2008 and beyond, cruising during the winter months in this region will only continue to gain in popularity as more itineraries are being offered that focus on the nearby (and southerly) Canary Islands, as well as Spain's Mediterranean coast and North Africa.

Beyond your Fare

Cruise travel has long had a reputation for being an all-inclusive experience. However, it has not been all-inclusive for years as passengers have been able to spend beyond their fares for casino gambling, shore excursions, art auctions, spa treatments, and more. In 2008, cruise lines will only continue to bolster the number of opportunities travelers have to spend their hard-earned cash onboard. Whether it's fine wine with dinner or a restaurant that operates on an a-la-carte basis, passengers in 2008 will see more onboard spending opportunities than ever before.

Caribbean Conundrum

The Caribbean has long been the most popular cruise destination; however, some itineraries are getting a bit stale for long-time cruise enthusiasts. In 2008, look for cruise lines and other developers to continue investing in unknown ports of call. Carnival, a leader in this field, is developing places like Grand Turk, in the Turks and Caicos, and Progreso, in Mexico.

Focus on Fitness

Flying right in the face of cruising's bad reputation for overwhelming indulgence is an effort by cruise lines to focus on health and wellbeing. Cruise lines now offer everything from boxing rings (Royal Caribbean's Freedom-class ships) to private training sessions and yoga. In 2008, look for more spa-oriented cruises that include fitness classes and spa treatments in the price of the cruise. Moving forward, a handful of lines, pioneered by Costa, are even creating spa resorts at sea, which include special cabins and restaurants that cater to spa-minded passengers.

Luxury goes Mainstream

In 2008, more luxury cruise options will be available than ever before. Whether you are onboard a mass-market ship or a small niche liner, luxury accommodations and services are only continuing to expand. For instance, Carnival Cruise Lines has a reservations-only supper club that allows cruisers to dine at some of the finest alternative restaurants at sea. As big ship cruises

continue to incorporate more luxury elements, such as Carnival's supper club, the true luxury lines are also raising the bar with enhanced onboard enrichment programs, shore excursion options and special dining programs.

Burgeoning Asia

As Asian economies have boomed in recent years, so has the interest of travelers in visiting and exploring this unique and diverse region of the world. Answering this curiosity, cruise lines are offering more opportunities to explore Asia by sea, as lines like Princess Cruises (with Sapphire Princess) and Royal Caribbean (with Rhapsody of the Seas) have moved larger ships into the market. In 2008, look for more cruise vacationers than ever to explore this region, as Asia is easily as diverse a destination as Europe.

Top 10 Ports Not-To-Be-Missed in 2008

Cruise Critic travel experts have put together a list of the top 10 ports that should not be missed in 2008. For any traveler booking a cruise in 2008, making sure at least one of these ports is on your itinerary will help ensure an outstanding high seas adventure.

Top 10 Ports Not-To-Be-Missed in 2008, in alphabetical order

- Amsterdam, Western Europe
- Dubrovnik, Europe, Eastern Mediterranean
- Hong Kong, Asia
- Martinique, Southern Caribbean
- Maui, Hawaii
- Muscat, Middle East
- Naples, Europe, Western Mediterranean
- St. Petersburg, Northern Europe
- Sydney, Australia
- Vancouver, Alaska

About Cruise Critic

Launched in October 1995, by The Independent Traveler, Inc., Cruise Critic was the first consumer cruise site on the Internet. It is both an interactive online magazine providing editorially driven cruise-related features and an active community, where travelers can share opinions and experiences. Cruise Critic is ranked the number one cruise information Web site by Hitwise. In the last five years, traffic on CruiseCritic.com has grown 350 percent and it currently attracts more than five million visitors per year. In response to this burgeoning demand and worldwide growth, Cruise Critic launched its U.K.- based sister site CruiseCritic.co.uk, in January 2008. Cruise Critic and The Independent Traveler were acquired by TripAdvisor(R), LLC, the world's largest travel community and an operating company of Expedia, Inc. in May 2007.

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