

CRUISE NEWS 2017

Pack your deck shoes — cutting-edge new ships and hot destinations like Cuba are making a splash on the 2017 cruise calendar. *By Janice Mucalov*



BEST NEW PORTS

Ocean Cay MSC Marine Reserve

Get ready for the biggest private Out Island in the Bahamas. Ocean Cay by MSC Cruises debuts December 2017 with six beaches, a spa, a zip-line and a wedding pavilion. And don't worry about tender hassles: Docking will allow showering back on board before returning to the island for a show in the 2,000-seat amphitheater.

Progreso, Mexico

Azamara Quest heads to this Yucatan port city for the first time on its May 21, 2017, voyage from Miami. Guests can marvel at Chichen Itza's

ruins or chill on the mile-long beach beside the *malecón* (promenade). Consider sampling the native licorice-flavored liqueur, *xtabentún*. When in Progreso ...

Timor-Leste, Southeast Asia

On two Fiji-Bali cruises in April and June 2017, Paul Gauguin will drop anchor at one of the newest countries in the world. In tiny Timor-Leste (above), which only became a sovereign nation in 2002, coral reefs beg to be explored, market vendors sell hand-woven *tais* (textiles), and artisan cafes serve world-class coffee.

CRUISE TRENDS

What's in the forecast for next year? Multigenerational families are booking multiroom suites for family reunions. "Baby boomers are buying up the big suites on Royal Caribbean and Norwegian and taking their 20-somethings along," says Heidi Allison, president of CruiseCompete. Plans will also be inked for more luxury expedition megayachts to lure younger, wealthier, more active guests, she adds. And cruise and travel agents will see a "renaissance," Allison predicts. "Consumers are trending back toward using agents. We're seeing it in requests and the chatter we hear from our consumers."

BEST NEW ITINERARY

No Starbucks. No Internet. Just vintage pink Chevys. **Lindblad Expeditions** (below) offers 10-night cultural cruises to Cuba from January to March 2017. Spot bee hummingbirds (the world's smallest birds) at Zapata Swamp National Park, meet Cuban choir singers and sip mojitos in Hemingway's favorite bars in Havana. French-owned **Ponant Yacht Cruises and Expeditions** will stop at the Bay of Pigs on an eight-night March 25 cruise aboard its 64-passenger sailing yacht. **MSC Cruises** is also home-porting two big ships in Havana — but no word yet on when U.S. citizens can book its seven-night itineraries.



BEST NEW SHIPS

FOR SUN-WORSHIPPERS



MSC Seaside

The 5,179-passenger ship flaunts outdoor glass catwalks, “beach condo” suites, a two-deck aqua park, and unprecedented deck space for lounging, strolling and dining. Year-round sailings to the Caribbean start in December 2017.

FOR SAILING PURISTS



Star Clippers Flying Clipper

This 300-passenger (the world’s largest) square-rigger sailing ship launches in late 2017. Guests can learn to scuba in a glass-sided dive pool, while another pool funnels sunlight into the dining room. Jack Sparrow is jealous.

FOR DEAL HUNTERS



Viking Ocean Cruises Viking Sky

Hailed by Cruise Critic as the “best new ocean ship” in 2015, the vessel sets sail again in February 2017. Staterooms boast private verandas and king-size beds, and rates include excursions, Wi-Fi and wine at lunch and dinner.

FOR FRANCOPHILES



Uniworld S.S. Joie de Vivre

Fine art and antiques from Sotheby’s and Christie’s auction houses will grace this ship, cruising the Seine starting in March 2017. A pool with a hydraulic floor turns into a dance club or an outdoor cinema at night. *Ooh la la.*

FOR BON VIVANTS



Silversea Silver Muse

Is a 400-square-foot “standard” suite big enough for you? Can you make do with eight restaurants (one branded Relais & Châteaux)? Silversea Cruises raises the bar in luxury cruising with this all-suite ship, coming April 2017.



BEST NEW RESTAURANTS AT SEA

Steakhouse

We can’t wait for The Grill by Michelin-starred chef Thomas Keller on Seabourn *Encore*. On the menu: lobster thermidor and creamed spinach.

French

A faux-cobblestone street leads into Charreux on Regent’s *Seven Seas Mariner*, being refurbished spring 2017. Metal filigree windows and rack of lamb complete the Parisian milieu.

Pan-Asian

Celebrity chef Roy Yamaguchi brings his skills to MSC *Seaside*. The gourmet cover-charge restaurant will have four teppanyaki grills, plus a sushi, sashimi and raw bar.