

Chapter 15

Luxury Ships

In This Chapter

- ▶ Seeking out the major luxury cruise ships in the Caribbean, Alaska, and the Mediterranean
- ▶ Preparing for the luxury cruising experience
- ▶ Discovering the best new luxury ships

The cruise lines in this chapter are the very best in terms of luxury and extravagance — think Ritz-Carlton meets the high seas. Discerning passengers travel on these vessels to be pampered with the best wines, gourmet food served on elegant china and crystal, and spacious accommodations decked out with down pillows, fine linens, walk-in closets, and marble bathrooms. On most of these ships, caviar is offered from silver serving dishes, champagne flows like water, and if you want a break from the elegant dining room, you can have a full dinner served to you in your cabin — by a white-gloved waiter, no less.

What Luxury Ships Have

Like their mainstream peers, luxury ships offer excellent swimming pools, health clubs, and spa facilities. Cabins usually have such amenities as televisions (sometimes with VCRs), telephones, mini-bars, bathrobes (and often slippers, too), safes, and hair dryers. The cuisine on these ships rivals the best land-based restaurants, and dinner is served with much pomp and circumstance. Entertainment and organized activities are more limited than on mainstream ships, because most guests on luxury vessels enjoy having time to amuse themselves. You're more likely to spend nights on these ships chatting about stocks with newfound acquaintances in a quiet piano bar than to watch a Las Vegas-style extravaganza (most elaborate on the Crystal line). Because passengers on luxury lines tend to be experienced travelers, shore excursions may be more elaborate than those mainstream lines offer. Chapter 3 goes into detail about the categories we use to describe the different types of cruises and the kinds of passengers they appeal to.

Several luxury vessels are small and intimate. And even on the bigger ships (such as Cunard's *QE2* and *QM2*, the largest passenger ship afloat, and Crystal's *Harmony*, *Symphony*, and new *Serenity*) you're unlikely to feel lost in a crowd. You feel like a member of a private club of experienced travelers who know what they want and are willing to pay for it. Passengers are mostly adults, although you may see some kids on the *QE2* and the Crystal vessels, which have children's facilities.



If you plan to cruise on Silversea, Cunard, or Crystal, you need to bring a tux (ladies, pack your fancy dresses), as well as a suit or jacket and tie. People on these ships tend to dress for dinner. On Radisson Seven Seas Cruises you don't need anything more than country club casual wear on Alaskan and Tahitian sailings, but on other itineraries men need a suit for certain nights. On Seabourn ships, bring the tux for formal nights; all other nights are casually elegant, with no tie required. On SeaDream, country club chic is acceptable any time (no need for the tux or ball gown).

What Luxury Ships Offer for Free

The ultra-luxury ships treat passengers like royalty. The following list samples what certain lines offer guests on a complimentary basis (or at least what they figure into their cruise rates):

- ✓ **Alcohol:** Seabourn, SeaDream, Silversea, and Radisson Seven Seas (offers wine with lunch and dinner on *Paul Gauguin*; dinner only on all other ships)
- ✓ **Free stocked minibar:** Radisson Seven Seas, Seabourn, Silversea, Crystal (top suites only), and Cunard (top suites only)
- ✓ **A shoreside event:** Seabourn, SeaDream, and Silversea (on select cruises)
- ✓ **Tips:** Included on Seabourn, SeaDream, Radisson Seven Seas, and Silversea
- ✓ **Transatlantic airfare:** Cunard (one-way with transatlantic cruises)
- ✓ **Unlimited soda water/mineral water:** Crystal, Seabourn, SeaDream, Radisson Seven Seas, and Silversea
- ✓ **Watersports:** Seabourn, SeaDream, and Radisson Seven Seas

Where Luxury Ships Go

Luxury ships tend to be much more eclectic in their itineraries than the mainstream ships we discuss in Chapter 14. They often sail from a different home port every week or stay in one region only long enough to offer a few itineraries and then move on to another part of the world. As many luxury ships are substantially smaller than the big mainstream ships, they also tend to visit smaller, less accessible ports.



Keep in mind that prices are based on brochure rates. You pay considerably less if you book early.

Crystal Cruises

2049 Century Park East, Suite 1400, Los Angeles, CA 90067; ☎ 800-820-6663; www.crystalcruises.com

✓ **Type of cruise:** Gourmet, luxury, resort, romantic

✓ **Ship size/style:** Modern, midsize luxury ship



With two ocean liner-size luxury ships, the *Crystal Harmony* (see Figure 15-1) and *Crystal Symphony*, and a larger, but no less luxurious new ship, *Crystal Serenity*, this Japanese-owned, Los Angeles-based line redefines first-class cruising. The state-of-the-art ships were created for a discerning clientele, and every facet of their operation is first-class and pleasing in a slightly glitzy, Beverly Hills manner. Passengers, who tend to be middle-aged or older, pay a pretty steep price for the experience. In return the line treats them to elegant and attentive service, outstanding food, luxurious accommodations, and the facilities of a megaship without huge crowds of fellow passengers. The top-quality entertainment varies from classical recitals to Broadway-style revues, and the casinos, operated by Caesars Palace, are among the best afloat. Gamblers are also offered drinks for free. Fitness centers are spacious, and spas are designed on the principles of feng shui.



(Photo: Crystal Cruises)

Figure 15-1: The *Crystal Harmony*

Many of the ships' plush cabins and enormous penthouse suites have verandas, plus all the latest amenities, with white-gloved butler service and Jacuzzi tubs. Concierge service is available to all passengers, as well

as access to a business center and the Internet. Public rooms feature a glamorous, modern design, and the line spares no expense on the trimmings, such as fresh flowers, china, and the very best linens.

The food is expertly prepared from the best ingredients. In addition to the elegant dining room, the ships have two specialty restaurants for alternative dining — one Italian and the other Asian. Famed restaurateur Wolfgang Puck even provides some of the recipes. And the *Crystal Serenity* has a sushi bar and Asian restaurant, **Silk Road**, that features the creations of celebrity chef Nobu Matsuhisa (of **Nobu** in Los Angeles, among other venues). On the penthouse deck you can even get Nobu room service. On select evenings, each ship also offers casual dining at an open-air grill. Each ship's wine cellar stocks some 25,000 bottles and 171 varieties. For a stiffer drink, each ship has a martini bar.

Onboard activities include golf and bridge clinics, wine tastings, and classes in calligraphy, computers, and ballroom dancing. You can catch a fabulous lecture series that has featured such notables as Barbara Walters and Regis Philbin. Famous chefs come on board for the line's series of wine- and food-themed sailings. Destination experts are brought on board to talk about specific ports of call. Another typically Crystal touch: A PGA-accredited golf pro accompanies most of the cruises to offer lessons and share playing experiences between ports.

Itineraries

In 2005, Crystal's ships plan to sail around the world to 57 countries and 174 ports of call, including stops in the Mediterranean, Northern Europe, Asia, the Panama Canal, the Caribbean, Hawaii, South America, Canada/New England, the Mexican Riviera, and Alaska (from San Francisco) on itineraries that range from one week to *Crystal Serenity's* 106-day world cruise. Ports the ships plan to visit in 2005 range from Antwerp, Belgium to Zadar, Croatia (A to Z, get it?). *Crystal Harmony* sails 11-day Panama Canal cruises between Costa Rica and Ft Lauderdale at the start of the year and does a series of Asian cruises in the spring. The *Harmony* serves as Crystal's representative in Alaska in the summer in 12-day rotation out of San Francisco and then spends winter in the Mexican Riviera (in 2006) for 10-day sailings out of Los Angeles.

Crystal Symphony is in South American service in the winter and then completes a short Caribbean and Panama Canal schedule through the spring before taking up position in Europe for a program of 7- to 12-day Mediterranean and Northern European cruises. The ship returns to the United States in the fall for Canada/New England cruises. The company's newest vessel, *Crystal Serenity*, starts the year with a 10-day Mexican Riviera cruise followed by a 106-day world tour, which the line markets as a whole cruise or by segments of 13 or 14 days in length. After the world cruise, the ship heads for Europe for 7- to 12-day Mediterranean service until late November when it returns to Ft Lauderdale for Panama Canal sailings.

Outstanding features

The line's Computer University @ Sea program offers computer lessons (for free) and e-mail/Internet access (for a fee) in a designated computer room. You can also access the Internet from your cabin (every cabin has dial-up access, and special laptop computers are available for rent). Televisions are closed-captioned for the hearing impaired. Gentlemen hosts are available to dance and socialize with solo female passengers. Theme cruises include health and fitness voyages and wine and food sailings with top-name chefs such as André Soltner and Nobu Matsuhisa (whose cuisine is also featured in the sushi bar and Asian restaurant on the *Crystal Serenity*). The line recently introduced an enhanced enrichment/lecture program on all ships, including language classes with Berlitz, music lessons with Yamaha, and Tai Chi through the **Bay Area Tai Chi Cultural Center**. At the Italian restaurants on each ship, you can enjoy a five-course **Valentino** dinner thanks to a special agreement between the famed Los Angeles restaurant and the cruise line.

Super deals



Rates are discounted up to 50 percent for passengers who book well in advance. A third passenger (age 12 and up) who shares a cabin with two full-fare passengers pays the minimum available fare. The line also offers repeat-passenger discounts and savings of 3.5 percent for full payment at least six months in advance of a sailing. Table 15-1 shows the rates for Crystal Cruises.

Table 15-1

Crystal Rates

<i>Ship</i>	<i>Inside</i>	<i>Outside</i>	<i>Suites</i>
<i>Crystal Harmony [a]</i>	\$5,305	\$5,695–\$9,683	\$12,150–\$22,355
<i>Crystal Serenity [b]</i>	N/A	\$8,205–\$13,425	\$16,905–\$27,165
<i>Crystal Symphony [c]</i>	N/A	\$6,050–\$11,070	\$13,980–\$20,430

[a] For 12-day Alaskan sailings

[b] For 15-day Panama Canal sailings

[c] For 10-day Mediterranean sailings

Fleet facts

Handsome ships by any standard, the *Crystal Serenity*, *Crystal Harmony*, and *Crystal Symphony* have some of the highest space-per-passenger ratios of any cruise ships in the industry. Cabins are large and well appointed, with almost half of them offering private verandas. The

Crystal Serenity is a bigger vessel at 1,080 passengers and 68,000 tons and offers guests even more room than the other two. The ship boasts expanded spa and fitness areas and more dining venues, entertainment lounges, penthouses (the biggest four are each a whopping 1,345 square feet), and deluxe cabins with verandas than the other ships. Table 15-2 shows current fleet specifications.

Table 15-2 Crystal Fleet Specifications

<i>Ship</i>	<i>Year Built</i>	<i>Passengers</i>	<i>Crew</i>	<i>Total Cabins</i>	<i>Tonnage</i>	<i>Length in Feet</i>
<i>Crystal Harmony</i>	1990	940	545	480	49,400	791
<i>Crystal Serenity</i>	2003	1,080	635	550	68,000	820
<i>Crystal Symphony</i>	1995	940	545	480	51,004	781

Cunard Line

6100 Blue Lagoon Dr., Suite 400, Miami, FL 33126; ☎ 800-7CUNARD; www.cunard.com

- ✓ **Type of cruise:** Luxury, elegant, classic, romantic
- ✓ **Ship size/style:** Grand ocean liner experience, multi-class



The British-bred grande dame of the cruise industry, Cunard comes with an impressive pedigree of famous ships such as the *Mauritania*, *Queen Mary*, and *Queen Elizabeth*. And the tradition continues under American owner Carnival Corporation, which bought the line for \$500 million in 1998. *Queen Mary 2* (see Figure 15-2), the new Cunard ocean liner, debuted in January 2004 with the largest amount of publicity any ship has ever received. Although part of the acclaim is for being the world's largest, longest, widest, and most expensive ship (about \$800 million) ever built, the ship is also a truly elegant — in a low-key rather than opulent way — and classic ocean-going vessel with exceptional public rooms and a wide variety of dining options. She's likely to become the most famous ship in the world. The fleet also consists of the legendary QE2; however, other than her World Cruise, QE2 now serves primarily the British market.



(Photo: Cunard Line)

Figure 15-2: The *Queen Mary 2*

Queen Mary 2 took over the classic Trans-Atlantic (New York to Southampton and the reverse) routes from the *QE2* in April 2004. Like the *QE2*, the *QM2* maintains the multi-class system (line officials prefer to use the term *categories*) where cabin level determines where one dines. Passengers in top categories of accommodations dine with other passengers from equivalent accommodations (on *QM2*, about 15 percent of all rooms warrant the upgraded dining rooms). Cunard passengers can expect ever-so-polite service delivered by an attentive white-gloved staff in very tasteful settings.

Passengers on the *QE2* tend to be experienced travelers, older and cultured, with previous Cunard sailings under their belts. With the newer, larger *Queen Mary 2*, the line wants to target a younger, more active, family-oriented audience (hence the addition of extensive children's facilities) along with the loyal Cunard-ers. The line is also particularly gay-friendly and often hosts large groups of gay travelers.

Cunard displays some big-name branding with its new vessel. *QM2* boasts **Todd English**, a branch of celebrity Boston chef English's **Olives** restaurant. And consulting on other menus is renowned chef Daniel Boulud. All the ship's china is Wedgwood. The ship boasts an extensive and impressive list of guest lecturers, including actors from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts and professors from Oxford University. Full-scale production shows and big-name guest performers also keep guests entertained. The ship has an extensive computer center that offers free classes for beginners and Internet access (for a fee).

Itineraries

The *Queen Mary 2* does 6-day Trans-Atlantic cruises (between New York and Southampton) from April to December. The ship also offers 12-day New England/Canada itineraries in the fall and some 12- and 14-day

European cruises (including the Mediterranean) in the summer and fall. In winter, *QM2* operates Caribbean cruises from New York City and Fort Lauderdale.

The *QE2* starts the year with a 110-day world cruise. After that, the *QE2* spends spring, summer, and fall in Europe, with cruises geared towards British travelers.

Outstanding features

The *Queen Mary 2* is truly a show in itself. The public rooms are impressive for both their range and quality. The spa, operated by the famous **Canyon Ranch**, is both beautiful and extensive, including a large hydrotherapy pool. It boasts the largest ballroom afloat and a planetarium that features reclining seats for the best viewing. The library is the largest and most fully stocked on any ship. Spaces of special note are the elegant **Veuve Clicquot** champagne bar, the very lively **Golden Lion Pub**, the classically designed casino, and the line's signature, nautically-decorated Chart Room. Even the ship's hospital is the largest afloat, with very advanced facilities should you need them.

Super deals



Early booking awards you savings of up to 20 percent. You can also find special deals of up to 50 percent off on selected sailings. Fares frequently include complimentary airfare deals. Trans-Atlantic crossings for the new *Queen Mary 2* come with free one-way airfare. Past passengers and people who book back-to-back cruises get special savings. You can find a more complete rate chart in Table 15-3.

Table 15-3 **Cunard Rates**

<i>Ship</i>	<i>Inside</i>	<i>Outside</i>	<i>Suite</i>
<i>Queen Mary 2*</i>	\$1,619–\$2,499	\$2,499–\$4,249	\$4,999–\$27,499

**For 6-day transatlantic crossings, including one-way airfare.*

Fleet facts

Carnival Corporation promised to expand the fleet when it bought Cunard; it delivered on that promise with *Queen Mary 2*. The 151,400 GRT, 2,620-passenger vessel is designed to look like a big version of a classic French liner. The vessel features stunningly beautiful suites (173 in six different categories — some are outrageously large; all have private balconies) and 1,137 regular rooms (782 have private balconies). The ship provides 30 rooms for the disabled in a variety of categories. Five swimming pools (including a kiddie pool), a full promenade, and vast amounts of deck space highlight the outdoor areas.

Table 15-4 shows current fleet specifications.

Table 15-4 Cunard Fleet Specifications						
Ship	Year Built	Passengers	Crew	Total Cabins	Tonnage	Length in Feet
<i>Queen Mary 2</i>	2003	2,620	1,253	1,310	150,000	1,132

Radisson Seven Seas Cruises

600 Corporate Dr., Suite 410, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33334; ☎ 800-477-7500 or 800-285-1835; www.rssc.com

- ✓ **Type of cruise:** Gourmet, luxury, romantic
- ✓ **Ship size/style:** Smallish and midsize modern luxury ships

Radisson Hotels Worldwide decided to translate its hospitality experience to the cruise industry back in 1992. Today, the fleet includes the *Radisson Diamond* (see Figure 15-3), *Paul Gauguin*, *Radisson Seven Seas Navigator*, *Radisson Seven Seas Mariner*, and *Radisson Seven Seas Voyager*. All the ships offer itineraries geared toward affluent travelers and provide an atmosphere in which an executive can kick back and enjoy the best in food and service. The ships cruise all over the world, including North America, Bermuda, Europe, Asia, South America, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and Tahiti (some sailings include the Marquesas Islands). The line also charts the *Explorer II* (previously the *Minerva*) for sailings in Antarctica — it sails as the top-level ship in that market.



(Photo: Radisson Seven Seas Cruises)

Figure 15-3: The *Radisson Diamond*

The Radisson Seven Seas experience is about service, amenities, and first-class cuisine, and the company fits in well in this mold with its luxury line counterparts. Seating in the dining rooms is open, too, so you can choose your dining companions. Wine with dinner is complimentary. Tips are included in the cruise fare.

The *Radisson Seven Seas Mariner* and the new *Radisson Seven Seas Voyager* feature a signature restaurant called **Signatures**, with cuisine overseen by chefs from the prestigious French cooking school *Le Cordon Bleu*. And if you want to learn the chefs' techniques to bring home, they conduct intensive six-hour workshops (made up of three 2-hour sessions) on the ship for \$395 per person. On occasion, free cooking demos are given. Both ships also offer dinner with American menus in **Latitudes**, a venue where the presentation is part of the entertainment. The onboard atmosphere on the ships is luxurious yet casual, with port-intensive itineraries designed for active, well-educated travelers, most of whom (but not all) are over 40; Radisson Seven Seas doesn't gear service toward kids. The line assumes that most of its passengers want to entertain themselves, so organized activities are reasonably limited. However, offerings do include lectures by well-known authors, movie producers, oceanographers, and more. You can play card, board, and shuffleboard games; take dance lessons; and, at night, watch cabaret and production shows. Local entertainers sometimes come aboard to perform.

All the ships have a pool, jogging track, health club, and spa; the *Navigator*, *Mariner*, *Voyager*, and *Diamond* also have whirlpools. The renowned **Carita of Paris** operates all spas. *Diamond* has a floating marina that crewmembers lower from the hull at various ports of call, offering a platform for water sports, including sailing, windsurfing, and water-skiing. The ships are popular with corporate groups — they sometimes charter the ships in their entirety for company meetings and incentive trips.

Itineraries

Radisson Seven Seas offers some of the most diverse and innovative itineraries in the luxury category. In 2005, *Voyager* is set to sail her first World Cruise, a 108-day Los Angeles to Fort Lauderdale extravaganza, followed by European (including Mediterranean) and Caribbean sailings. *Mariner* starts the year in South America and then sails the Caribbean/Panama Canal/Mexico, Alaska, and Far East routes. *Navigator* plans to cruise Caribbean, Bermuda, Canada/New England, and Northern Europe/Baltic routes. *Diamond* plans to concentrate on the Caribbean and Europe (including the Mediterranean) in 2005. *Paul Gauguin* sails 7-day Tahitian cruises year-round (see Chapter 21).

Outstanding features

Radisson Seven Seas follows a no-tipping policy. A headline entertainer (usually a soloist or comedian) sails with each cruise; you can also enjoy dancers, a five-piece band, and a resident quartet. Shore excursions tend to be more creative than the norm. Gentlemen hosts and bridge

instructors are available on select sailings. The line offers a youth activities program on Alaskan sailings and select Bermuda and Baltic sailings. With the all-outside, all-suite design of *Navigator*, *Mariner*, and *Voyager*, combined with all the items included in the cruise fare, you can find some real values.

Super deals



Radisson Seven Seas offers early-booking perks such as half-off companion fares, two-for-one fares, and discounted fares for a third passenger who shares a cabin. Some fares include free nights at a deluxe hotel or other innovative pre/post cruise offerings. Prices quoted for the line sometimes include free airfare (when they don't, ask for low-cost air add-ons). The line may offer a modest supplement for single travelers. See Table 15-5 for more Radisson Seven Seas rates.

Table 15-5

Radisson Seven Seas Rates

Ship	Inside	Outside	Suite
<i>Radisson Diamond</i>	N/A	\$3,295–\$4,395	\$6,395
<i>Radisson Seven Seas Mariner</i> [a]	N/A	N/A	\$2,795–\$12,695
<i>Radisson Seven Seas Navigator</i>	N/A	N/A	\$3,395–\$9,195
<i>Radisson Seven Seas Voyager</i> [b]	N/A	N/A	\$2,595–\$9,095

[a] For 7-day Alaska sailings

[b] For 5-day Caribbean sailings

Fleet facts

The *Radisson Diamond* is a most unusual ship: The \$125 million vessel is a giant catamaran, with twin hulls atop that sit the passenger areas — a design that makes for a very wide ship. Only 420 feet long, she is nonetheless only 2 feet thinner (at 102 feet) than the *QE2*, which measures more than twice her length at 963 feet. Inside, thanks to her design, the *Diamond* is very roomy; you can't tell she has such a unique bottom. All her cabins are suites. The *Radisson Seven Seas Navigator* is faster and bigger, and all her cabins are suites with ocean views (most with verandas). The French-built *Radisson Seven Seas Mariner* is even bigger and more advanced, and all her cabins are suites with balconies. The *Mariner* added an Internet cafe, **Club.com**, with 18 stations for sending e-mail and surfing the Internet; the cafe also offers computer classes. You can e-mail from the *Navigator* and *Diamond*, but from less elaborate setups. A sister ship to *Mariner* (but not its twin), the all-suite, all-balcony *Radisson Seven Seas Voyager* debuted in March 2003 and took the best of

both Navigator and Mariner, especially Navigator's bathroom design. Mariner and Voyager are two of the most spacious, most luxurious ships afloat. Table 15-6 shows current fleet specifications.

Table 15-6 Radisson Seven Seas Fleet Specifications

<i>Ship</i>	<i>Year Built</i>	<i>Passengers</i>	<i>Crew</i>	<i>Total Cabins</i>	<i>Tonnage</i>	<i>Length in Feet</i>
<i>Radisson Diamond</i>	1992	354	192	175	20,295	420
<i>Radisson Seven Seas Mariner</i>	2001	700	445	354	50,000	675
<i>Radisson Seven Seas Navigator</i>	1999	490	313	250	30,000	560
<i>Radisson Seven Seas Voyager</i>	2003	700	445	350	49,000	670

Seabourn Cruise Line/The Yachts of Seabourn

6100 Blue Lagoon Dr., Suite 400, Miami, FL 33126; ☎ 800-929-9595; www.seabourn.com

- ✓ **Type of cruise:** Gourmet, luxury, romantic
- ✓ **Ship size/style:** Small luxury ships



The ships of Seabourn, marketed as *The Yachts of Seabourn*, are much like small, private clubs. The onboard ambience is one of elegant refinement. Seabourn is truly a line for cruisers who want to see the world from a vessel, not much larger than a private yacht, carrying a limited number of guests in the ultimate of quality. With that said, Seabourn isn't for everyone. The *Seabourn Spirit*, *Seabourn Legend* (see Figure 15-4), and *Seabourn Pride* are for the moneyed, and the discreet decor and environment prove it. The lucky few onboard these ships obviously like the product: The line's repeat-passenger rate of 50 percent is among the highest in the industry. Service is impeccable and the cuisine, innovative and expertly prepared, matches the quality of the best land-based restaurants. The dining rooms operate on an open-seating basis (so you can make your own dinner party). Dinner menus in the main dining room feature the creative influence of New York-based celebrity chef Charlie Palmer. An indoor/outdoor **Verandah Café** offers a more casual

alternative-dining venue. On formal nights, most men on Seabourn wear tuxes and the women dress up like royalty. On other nights, even Seabourn loosens up a bit with a no-ties-required policy.

From past surveys, Seabourn has determined that most of its passengers have household incomes that exceed \$200,000 a year. Many are retired, although the average age is 52, and their net worth may top \$4 million. Families sometimes travel on Seabourn ships, but no organized activities exist for kids (bring along your nanny).



(Photo: Seabourn Cruise Line)

Figure 15-4: The *Seabourn Legend*

The atmosphere on board all the ships is calm and relaxing; you don't see people rushing around. Passengers and staff alike are well mannered and respect each other's privacy. By design, the *Seabourn Legend*, *Pride*, and *Spirit* offer plenty of space for passengers — after all, most of the passengers live in really big houses and are used to stretching out. During days at sea, passengers occupy themselves reading, chatting, or maybe playing Scrabble. Sometimes, Seabourn invites guest celebrities on board — including golf legend Arnold Palmer, ex-*Supreme* Mary Wilson, singer/actress Michelle Phillips, comedian Tom Smothers (of the Smothers Brothers), *Jeopardy* host Alex Trebek, and Frank Deford, a senior contributing editor for *Sports Illustrated*, in 2004 alone. A new chef series features notable chefs who offer cooking demonstrations and signature dishes for the ships' restaurants and participate in shopping excursions to local markets. Chefs on board in 2004 included Dean Fearing of Dallas' **Mansion on Turtle Creek**, Jean Marie Lacroix of **Lacroix at the Rittenhouse** in Philadelphia, Todd Gray of **Equinox** in Washington, D.C., Gerry Hayden and Claudia Fleming from New York's **Amuse**, and Rob Feenie of Vancouver's **Lumiere**. Nighttime entertainment is low-key: A few singers perform in the main show lounge and a piano man entertains in a bar. Shore excursions are creative and suitably upscale. All three ships have Internet centers that offer Internet access.

Itineraries

Seabourn offers an enticing array of sailings for the 2005 season with most ranging from 7 to 18 days. Because ports are not usually repeated, the line combines many of the 7-day cruises into longer sailings without repetition. *Seabourn Pride* starts the year in South America and heads for the Mediterranean and Baltic for the spring and summer. In the fall, the *Pride* does a series of Canada/New England sailings and spends the rest of the year in the Caribbean and South America. *Seabourn Spirit* starts and ends the year in Southeast Asia. It spends spring, summer, and fall in the Mediterranean. *Seabourn Legend* starts off with Central American and Caribbean sailings before it heads to the Eastern Mediterranean for spring, summer, and fall. It returns to Central America and the Caribbean for the end of the year.

Outstanding features

The *Seabourn Legend*, *Pride*, and *Spirit* each have a teak-decked platform hidden in their hulls that, when lowered, provides a launching point for water sports — Sunfish sailboats, kayaks, snorkeling gear, high-speed banana boats, and water skis are available for use. The ships also have a metal mesh net that becomes a seawater swimming pool. The cruise fare includes tips, wine and spirits (and even premium champagne), and mini-massages (given on deck). Each cruise includes a complimentary shore-side experience such as a private visit to a museum after closing hours, a trip to a concert, or a visit to the home of a dignitary. Adventure Collection shore excursions (for which you pay extra) are designed for active travelers and include hiking, biking, snorkeling, fishing, horseback riding, and kayaking outings. The line doubled the size of the gym on each ship in 2003 to accommodate new classes such as yoga, Pilates, and Cardio Ki-Bo.

Super deals



Seabourn offers up to 50 percent off for booking early and savings of an extra 10 percent for combining two cruises. Special savings are available on select cruises for repeat passengers. Single travelers can get run-of-the-ship discounts, whereby Seabourn picks your cabin based on availability, and you save big bucks. The line offers occasional deals with free airfares. Table 15-7 shows more Seabourn rates.

Table 15-7 Seabourn Rates			
Ship	Inside	Outside	Suite
<i>Seabourn Legend</i>	N/A	N/A	\$4,495–\$14,295
<i>Seabourn Pride</i> [a]	N/A	N/A	\$5,995–\$15,795
<i>Seabourn Spirit</i> [b]	N/A	N/A	\$5,975–\$15,795

[a] For 7-day New England and Canada sailings

[b] For 7-day Eastern Mediterranean sailings

Fleet facts

All the cabins on the *Legend*, *Pride*, and *Spirit* are suites with 5-foot-wide picture windows; 36 suites on each of the ships have French doors that open onto a balcony offering sea views and breezes (although you don't have enough room to sit). All suites also have new *Bose Wave* radio/CD players (a library of music and book CDs is available onboard). The cabins offer complimentary bar setups, luxurious bathrooms, quality bath amenities from **Molton Brown** of London, and walk-in closets, among many other amenities. A couple of owner's suites on each ship are very large and offer private verandas. Table 15-8 shows current fleet specifications.

Table 15-8 Seabourn Fleet Specifications

<i>Ship</i>	<i>Year Built</i>	<i>Passengers</i>	<i>Crew</i>	<i>Total Cabins</i>	<i>Tonnage</i>	<i>Length in Feet</i>
<i>Seabourn Legend</i>	1992	208	160	104	10,000	439
<i>Seabourn Pride</i>	1988	208	160	104	10,000	439
<i>Seabourn Spirit</i>	1989	208	160	104	10,000	439

SeaDream Yacht Club

2601 South Bayshore Dr., Penthouse 1B, Coconut Grove, FL 33133; ☎ **800-707-4911**; www.seadreamyachtclub.com

- ✓ **Type of Cruise:** Luxury (country club chic), romantic
- ✓ **Ship size/style:** Small, yacht-like

Size does matter. And in the case of the two ships, *SeaDream I* and *SeaDream II* (shown in Figure 15-5), from SeaDream Yacht Club, smaller is decidedly better. When the owners of SeaDream, Atle Brynstad and Larry Pimentel, the founder and former president of Seabourn Cruise Line, respectively, took over the former Sea Goddess ships from Cunard (operated most recently as part of the Seabourn brand), they promised “an extraordinary, ultra-luxury, mega-yachting experience not currently available.” Whether you call their two vessels big yachts or small cruise ships, the experience is truly luxurious. Excellent service and fine dining are the hallmarks. With each ship carrying 110 guests in 55 suites, they sail small by any standards and offer an intimate, personalized trip.

The ships were built in the 1980s, and the space ratio is smallish by today's standards. Cruisers don't have much inside public space. And the ships have no cabins with verandas. To help make up for this, SeaDream has refitted the ships to provide plenty of excellent outside space, including the addition of an extra deck. The ships provide lounge chairs between the upper sitting decks (with some nifty dividers for privacy) and the aft pool area on deck three. You can also tan on 11 super-comfy Balinese Sun Beds on Deck 6 (umbrellas provide shade for people who don't want too much sun).



(Photo: SeaDream Yacht Club)

Figure 15-5: The *SeaDream II*

The passengers are mostly couples who have cruised before on other luxury ships, especially the smaller ones; most are in their mid-40s to 60s. SeaDream isn't a cruise line for the swinging young crowd; it favors travelers who like a refined, quiet trip where wonderful dining and great service, relaxation and conversation, and visits to interesting places are important. The largest number of guests, wherever the ship sails, are from the United States. Mediterranean cruises carry a decent number of Europeans. The atmosphere onboard is country club chic; over the top outfits and tuxes are not necessary in any way. Entertainment is usually a piano player before and after dinner; the activities director offers brief previews of each upcoming port. Other than that, the ships leave guests to their own devices when it comes to entertainment on board. Meals become a major focus of the day. Breakfasts and lunches are served either in the **Dining Salon** or outside at the **Topside Restaurant** (weather permitting). An expertly prepared and presented dinner is the evening's main entertainment. All meals are open seating and the Dining Salon is large enough to seat all passengers at one time. The Maitre d' tries to make sure that everyone sits with whom, and at the size table, they want. Champagne and caviar are plentiful, offered poolside and waterside at some ports.

The ships pay special attention to your well-being. SeaDream operates its own Asian-influenced spa and gym with a mind-and-body component. A golf simulator offers pretend play at 50 championship courses.

Itineraries

Both ships include the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, the Greek Islands, and the Croatian Coast in their itineraries. *SeaDream I* does 7-day Caribbean cruises (from St. Thomas, Antigua, and St. Martin) in winter and spring, 4- and 5-day cruises (from San Juan) in the winter, 4- to 7-day western Mediterranean cruises in the spring, and 7-day western Mediterranean and 7-day eastern Mediterranean cruises in the summer and fall. *SeaDream II* sails basically the same itineraries, but it sticks to the western Mediterranean in summer and fall.

Note: Many of the SeaDream sailings are privately chartered, so you may have to be flexible with your travel dates.

Outstanding features

The top feature is the ships themselves; at only 344 feet long, they can get into ports that other ships cannot and dock in very special places, such as curbside in Monte Carlo. The ships overnight in key ports (in St. Barts or St. Tropez, for instance), allowing extra time for you to wander. An activities director leads personalized (and complimentary) walking tours in certain ports, such as to the local market in St. Tropez. With a crew of 89 looking after just 110 guests on board, the service is fantastic. Smoking is allowed only on certain open decks.

Super deals



You can get early-bird savings (called “Book Now and Save” rates) of up to 65 percent and other specials that may create even more discounts off of the brochure rates we list in Table 15-9. SeaDream’s Web site and brochures spell them out. Also, for comparison purposes, rates include all gratuities, virtually all beverages including wine with lunch and dinner and spirits anytime, and use of all water toys and select shore outings.

Table 15-9

SeaDream Rates

<i>Ship</i>	<i>Inside</i>	<i>Outside</i>	<i>Suite</i>
<i>SeaDream I*</i>	N/A	\$3,900–\$6,900	\$7,800–\$17,250
<i>SeaDream II*</i>	N/A	\$4,900–\$6,900	\$9,800–\$17,250

**Rates don’t include port charges.*

Fleet facts

Most cabins measure 195 square feet. Sixteen are convertible to a double-sized room — called a Commodore Club Stateroom — by booking two connecting rooms (essentially creating a suite with two bathrooms and a living room). At 490 square feet, the one Owner's Suite is extremely luxurious. All the rooms have ocean views and were refurbished as part of the conversion to the SeaDream brand. The linens are Belgian and very comfy. The bathrooms are efficient for their size (the floor to ceiling showers are excellent), and the toiletries are by *Bulgari* (exemplifying the luxury provided). And all the cabins come with a nice audio/video setup including a DVD player. Table 15-10 shows current fleet specifications.

Table 15-10 SeaDream Fleet Specifications

<i>Ship</i>	<i>Year Built</i>	<i>Passengers</i>	<i>Crew</i>	<i>Total Cabins</i>	<i>Tonnage</i>	<i>Length in Feet</i>
<i>SeaDream I</i>	1984	110	89	55	4,260	344
<i>SeaDream II</i>	1985	110	89	55	4,260	344

Silversea Cruises

110 E. Broward Blvd., Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301; ☎ 800-722-9055; www.silversea.com

- ✓ **Type of cruise:** Gourmet, luxury, romantic
- ✓ **Ship size/style:** Modern, smallish luxury ships



Luxurious sister ships *Silver Cloud* and *Silver Wind* carry just 296 guests each, but they carry those lucky few in true splendor. All the cabins are outside suites; more space is allotted to each passenger than aboard almost any other ship; and the ships employ a larger crew, a staff ready to cater to your every desire on a 24-hour basis. The fine accoutrements that complement all this luxury include Limoges china, Christofle silverware, fine Irish bed linens by Hilden, and wonderfully soft down pillows.

The newer *Silver Shadow* and *Silver Whisper* (see Figure 15-6) are slightly bigger at 25,000 tons, carrying 396 passengers. These all-suite vessels add such features as more private verandas (85 percent as opposed to 75 percent on the older ships), poolside dining venues, a larger spa facility, a computer center, a wine and champagne bar designed by Moët & Chandon, and a cigar lounge designed by renowned cigar purveyor Davidoff in the style of an English smoking club.



(Photo: Silversea Cruises)

Figure 15-6: The *Silver Whisper*

The atmosphere aboard all the Silversea ships is elegant in a low-key, sociable way. Activity offerings include bridge and other games, aerobics, dance lessons, wine tastings, lectures, and bingo and quiz shows. Nighttime entertainment includes small production shows, dancing, a piano bar, a small casino, and visiting performers from whatever region the ship sails through.

All the ships offer open-seating, five-star cuisine with new menus and expanded room service. The service is extraordinary — just ask and you shall receive.

Silversea's pricing is all-inclusive: The cruise fare covers tips, wines, spirits, champagne, a free mini-bar setup in your cabin, free shuttles from ports to city centers, and more. Select cruises also include a shore-side cultural event (such as a performance by a local dance troupe).

Passengers on these ships are generally well traveled and well heeled (and not necessarily American). Most are in the over-50 age group. Silversea doesn't design its ships for kids (although you may occasionally see a few on board).

Itineraries

When upscale cruisers look at Silversea's itinerary lineup for 2005, their wide eyes light up with glee. You can't find a major cruising area in the world that Silversea's four ships don't plan to reach. And, in a wonderfully innovative way, they have cruises from 6 to 18 nights and every length in between; they cover the world's top destinations and plan to reach over 30 new ports for the first time. The Silversea ships sail to and in the Africa/Indian Ocean (*Cloud*, *Shadow*, and *Wind*), Alaska/Pacific Coast (*Shadow*), Caribbean (*Whisper*), Far East/South Pacific (*Cloud* and

Shadow), Canada/New England/Colonial Coast (*Whisper*), and South America/Amazon (*Cloud*, *Shadow*, and *Whisper*). But for an incredible choice, all four ships sail in the Mediterranean during the key months and *Cloud* and *Whisper* sail in Northern Europe when the days feature long hours of daylight. The 2-night call in St. Petersburg — part of the July 5th cruise — is exceptional in that it allows for a full day's excursion to Moscow.

Outstanding features

Silversea has installed a new specialty restaurant on each of the four ships (**Saletta** on *Wind* and *Cloud* and **Le Champagne** on *Shadow* and *Whisper*). The restaurant is a new Relais & Chateaux (a guide that rates the top restaurants and hotels around the world) venture overseen by world-famous chef Joachim Koeper. The line includes this dining in the cruise price — only the vintage wines are added to the bill. Culinary cruises with Relais & Chateaux feature guest chefs from gourmet restaurants, and a new wine series features well-known vintners. Silversea offers lectures by noted journalists and photographers. You can e-mail from all ships, and all ships have Bloomberg Professional Service terminals that guests can use (for free) to check the latest stock market and financial news. Cabins have VCRs, and you can borrow tapes from the movie library.

Super deals



The line's early-booking savings program lists specific savings that go up as high as 50 percent. A most noteworthy program is Silversea's new and unique Personalized Voyages, which allows passengers to create their own itineraries and get on and off at select ports (you pay a daily rate, with a 5-night minimum stay required). If you pay at least six months in advance, you get an additional 5 percent off. Members of the line's Venetian Society Repeat Guest program save 5 to 15 percent on select cruises, combinable with other discounts. Special deals are available for singles. The new pre/post-cruise program, "Silver sights," offers more hotel and add-on land options in more cities. You can find more Silversea rates in Table 15-11.

Table 15-11

Silversea Rates*

<i>Ship</i>	<i>Inside</i>	<i>Outside</i>	<i>Suite</i>
<i>Silver Cloud</i>	N/A	N/A	\$3,951–\$6,195
<i>Silver Shadow</i>	N/A	N/A	\$3,395–\$6,595
<i>Silver Whisper</i>	N/A	N/A	\$2,047–\$4,795
<i>Silver Wind</i>	N/A	N/A	\$3,391–\$6,095

*All Silversea rates are cruise-only.

Fleet facts

The all-suite cabins on Silversea ships have walk-in closets, marble bathrooms, and all-around fantastic upper-end amenities. The line adds duvets, clocks, and binoculars in each suite. Nearly 75 percent of the cabins come with private verandas. On the newer ships, the *Silver Shadow* and *Silver Whisper*, 85 percent of the cabins feature private verandas. The biggest suites are apartment-sized and come with extras like free laundry service. Table 15-12 shows current fleet specifications.

Table 15-12 Silversea Fleet Specifications

<i>Ship</i>	<i>Year Built</i>	<i>Passengers</i>	<i>Crew</i>	<i>Total Cabins</i>	<i>Tonnage</i>	<i>Length in Feet</i>
<i>Silver Cloud</i>	1994	296	210	148	16,800	514
<i>Silver Shadow</i>	2000	388	295	194	25,000	597
<i>Silver Whisper</i>	2001	388	295	194	25,000	597
<i>Silver Wind</i>	1994	296	210	148	16,800	514

