

Mediterranean Cruise

On Board Celebrity Cruise Lines' *Millennium*

First time visitors to **Europe** will find a **Mediterranean** cruise one of the best options allowing travellers to visit numerous cities while enjoying all inclusive accommodation, world class dining, unlimited amenities, daily activities and nightly entertainment along with the comfort of knowing that your shore excursions are fully escorted. My holidays in Europe have usually been about 3 weeks in duration and while my vacations have been thrilling to say the least – I would not have wanted to miss the 2 week Mediterranean cruise we enjoyed onboard **Celebrity Cruise Lines'** ship *The Millennium*.



I was excited with the anticipation of visiting so many different cities that I may not have otherwise had the opportunity to experience. Our itinerary was to include ports in **Spain, France, Italy, Greece & Croatia**, all in 14 days! Don't be frightened by a seemingly hectic schedule – it is quite the contrary. We had plenty of leisure time on the ship and time on our own to discover the port cities in addition to our escorted shore excursions.

In my opinion, the best month for travel in Europe is September mainly for the near-perfect weather, which is when we chose to cruise. While there is an argument to be made if you travel closer to the end of the cruising season (October or early November) which can occasionally offer lower fares, the temperatures may be a little cooler. Some travellers prefer the hotter months of July & August yet summer being peak season the crowds can sometimes be a little overwhelming. For me, the comfortable climate in September is more pleasant to enjoy active shore excursions like walking tours, hiking or biking.



Our departure port of **Barcelona** intrigued us, so we decided to book 2 nights' pre-cruise accommodations allowing us time to explore this exciting medieval city before embarkation. Barcelona is the capital of the Spanish region **Catalonia** and the **Gothic Quarter** is part of the 'Old City'. The buildings here date from the 13th century and create a truly enchanting medieval atmosphere.

The **Picasso Gallery**, located on Carrer de Montcada, exhibits some of Picasso's earlier works. **Las Ramblas**, stretching from the water-front to Plaça de Catalunya, is a delightful, tree-lined boulevard and is the center of activity in Barcelona. A variety of shops, side-walk cafés and street entertainers add to the exciting experience of strolling along this world-famous concourse.



The **Columbus Monument** is located at the bottom of Las Ramblas on the water-front where you can take an elevator ride to the top for panoramic views of the entire city. At the **Moll d'Espanya** you can find the Imax Theatre, Aquarium (the biggest in Europe) and the **Maremagnum Mall**, with its many shops, restaurants, music bars, terraces & night life.

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Our pre-cruise hotel accommodation was at the lovely **4-Star Regina Hotel** built in 1917 and painstakingly refurbished in 2006. Conveniently located one block from the Plaça de Catalunya we could stroll the Las Ramblas or shop at the more upscale, designer boutiques of the **Upper Rambla** and **Passeig de Gràcia**. Guestrooms have hardwood floors, cherry wood furniture, bathrobes and slippers, black-marbled bathrooms, handheld showers, minibars, and high-speed Internet access. Hotel amenities include; on-site restaurant, lounge/bar, fitness center, concierge service and more.

We were thrilled with a delightful Catalonian/Spanish restaurant that was recommended to us located just off C/ Ferran from La Rambla – **The Mi Burrito Y Yo** (ADDRESS: PASO DE LA ENSEÑANZA, 2. TEL. NO: 93-318-2742 OR 93-302-1000). The restaurant's name translated to English is "My Donkey and I". The quaint, cozy atmosphere is inviting and the original design (the bar stools on the main level are actually "horses' saddles") will lure you into a charming, rustic setting. Along side the bar downstairs is a small dining room where patrons can enjoy their meal while listening to beautiful, soft piano music. On the second level is an enchanting, quiet dining room where you can watch the activities in the court yard below while you dine. The relaxed, old-world décor is enhanced with antiques displayed around the dining room and the efficient, attentive staff will enrich your dining experience. Enjoy rustic dishes of traditional Catalan fare - the specialties on the menu are roast meats cooked on an open fire. **Excelente !!**

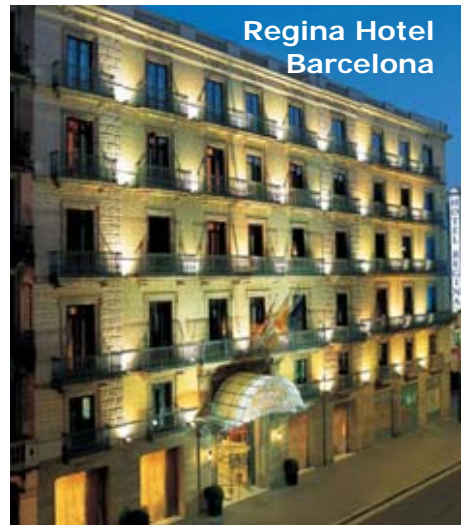
For our transfer to the port, we asked the hotel Concierge to pre-book our taxi. Like most of the hotels in Barcelona, they have many guests who are cruise passengers and booking transfers are quite common. The same applies to the Barcelona Taxi Cab Drivers who are very familiar with the port routine and locations, so you can be confident that you are in good hands.

On the day of embarkation we arrived at the port to meet our ship; **Celebrity's Millennium**. The earlier you can arrive the better as line ups tend to be long. Simply come prepared to wait for while – it's a good idea to use the facilities (if necessary) before you line up and make sure you've had a snack and/or refreshment before you arrive at the port as you will not be able to take liquids/gels through security. Security and check-in staff are all fast and efficient and they do move passengers along as quickly as possible. If you are travelling in a class that allows you preferred check-in, your luggage will be tagged accordingly and you will be checked-in with less wait time.

This was my first time cruising and I was excited and eager. As our cab pulled up to the port my first glimpse of the ship was a sight I'll never forget. She was grand and majestic against the backdrop of the sea and the city. I knew before I boarded that this was going to be an experience of a lifetime.

As we boarded, we were greeted by a photographer who was taking souvenir photos for the passengers and we had the option to purchase it later on. Our **Celebrity Concierge Class Balcony Stateroom** was impressive and bright with floor-to-ceiling glass sliding doors leading out onto a spacious balcony, a large sitting area with sofa, chair & vanity, TV, queen-size bed convertible to 2 twin beds and amenities included:

- Welcome Champagne
- *Daily fruit selection
- *Fresh-cut flowers
- *Daily hors d'oeuvres
- *Menu of pillows
- *Duvets & pillow-top mattresses
- *Leather key holder, personalized stationery, a tote bag & umbrella
- *Double-thick Frette bathrobes
- *Hansgrohe® showerhead
- *VIP invitations to events
- *Early embarkation and debarkation
- *Dining & seating preference
- *Preference on shore excursions
- *Express luggage delivery
- *Personal Concierge service.



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We enjoyed our Welcome Champagne on the balcony and then made our way to the top deck so we could watch as we sailed out of port and the beautiful city of Barcelona disappeared beyond the horizon.

Our first night onboard was thrilling as we toured the ship to familiarize ourselves with the seemingly unlimited list of entertainment and activity options. World-class restaurants, Broadway-style shows, movie theatre, casino, a luxurious spa and amenities that rival the grandest hotels on land. Combining traditional European hospitality and warm engaging service with one staff member for every two guests, Celebrity's service is consistently top-rated by such experts as Condé Nast Traveler.

There are a variety of dining choices from casual eateries like the **AquaSpa Café** serving light, healthy fare to specialty restaurants where meals are prepared tableside and an extensive buffet with indoor or outdoor dining. The **Main Dining Room** is gleaming with crystal glasses, exquisite china and silverware. A dramatic setting for any meal, this elegant dining room features an endless array of cuisine for breakfast, lunch and dinner. We enjoyed three 'Formal Nights' dining in the main dining room during our 2 week cruise. The remainder of the time we could relax in 'smart casual' for dinner and 'casual day-wear' for breakfast and lunch. However, there are many passengers who enjoy going formal each night for dinner – perfectly acceptable!



A bygone era comes to life in the **RMS Olympic Restaurant**. Reminiscent of the grand days of transatlantic cruising with table-top service and a dine-in wine cellar (*proper dining attire and reservations required*) (*additional charges apply*). We enjoyed two exceptional meals in the Olympic Restaurant and I don't think I have ever had better service in any other restaurant I've visited. The staff is sincerely attentive and courteous - every request is handled with the utmost care and consideration. The food is expertly prepared to your liking and the menu choices do not disappoint. We ordered wine with our meal and you can have your wine selections stored and delivered to you at your table for your next meal in the main dining room. The Olympic Restaurant is an experience you will want to enjoy at least once during your cruise!

To relax and revitalize you can book treatments at the world-famous AquaSpa® by Elemis (*additional charges apply*). Or, if you prefer, challenge yourself to an invigorating work out with exercise classes overlooking the vast ocean through breathtaking floor-to-ceiling windows (*additional charges apply*). We chose to register for Pilates classes, conducted by our very helpful 'Aussie' instructor, which we thoroughly enjoyed and had a lot of fun bonding with our classmates.

We enjoyed a wonderful musical performance at the Celebrity Theatre. Soft, comfortable seating and Celebrity-style cocktail service highlight this elegant showroom. We regularly visited the Cinema Center for movie night but it is also where you'll find Celebrity Discoveries Enrichment Series Lectures, Interactive Game Shows and Informational Seminars. A program of theatre performances, movies and lectures will help you plan your evening of entertainment during your cruise!

Aboard every ship, Celebrity's European-inspired piazza and elegant galleria hold the promise of discovery and delight. Marble walkways lead you from sophisticated boutiques to fine jewellery stores that hold stylish clothing, precious gems, cosmetics, fragrances and more. Window shop, attend a fashion show or select gifts for friends and family. Then, indulge yourself as you encounter the ideal memento of your truly extraordinary cruise experience. We strolled the concourse several times and came away with some wonderful treasures to take home.



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Whether you're interested in gaming or just curious, the sophisticated casinos offer the perfect backdrop for an unforgettable evening. Soak up the sounds of a grand piano as you share an intimate nightcap at Michael's Club. The Martini Bar offers 26 varieties of this quintessential beverage and one is sure to hit the spot. Enjoy the comfort of plush seating and subdued lighting and a romantic champagne toast at the Champagne Bar.



Whatever your fancy, Celebrity's famous personal service with a taste of luxury will make you feel like the only guest on board!

Be sure to check out some of the highlights
of our *Shore Excursions...*
Click on "***Mediterranean Shore Excursions***"
on the previous page.

Our experienced and knowledgeable Cruise Consultants will be more than pleased to speak with you about planning your next, or first, cruise holiday!