



## Interview with Michelle Van Deusen from Royal Caribbean



Drawing of the Aqua theatre on the Oasis of the Seas

Royal Caribbean's Oasis of the Seas, the largest passenger ship afloat, will be making her debut sailing in 2009. A sister ship, the Allure of the Seas, will be coming out in 2010. We recently talked with Michelle Van Deusen about these exciting new ships and what else is new with Royal Caribbean.

FamilyTravelGurus: Tell us about your two new ships and what unique features they will offer passengers.

The Oasis of the Seas will be having her inaugural sailing the end of 2009, and the Allure of the Seas around the same time in 2010. What is unique about them is that they will be destinations unto themselves with seven different "neighborhoods". This neighborhood concept gives the passengers many areas to explore, relax, drink and have fun.

There will be Central Park which will be the ship's town square, a great gathering space for dining, entertainment and street performances. Central Park will open to the sky with live trees, plants and flowers to make it truly "outdoors".

The Boardwalk is a neat area dedicated to families with an old fashioned Carousel at sea, amusements, games, and attractions like Madame Zamara's psychic reading and tattoo parlor (henna dyed). This area opens up to the one-of-a-kind AquaTheater which will have daily water performances by aerialists and divers.

Like our Voyager and Freedom class ships, these two new ships will also feature our signature "Royal Promenade" which is a great place to shop, eat or just people watch! The Rising Tide will be a focal point - it's a levitating bar that ascends & descends over three decks!

For those passengers that like to unwind, another neighborhood is the "Vitality at Sea Spa & Fitness" area. They can enjoy a relaxing massage, restore their bodies in our "Thermal Suites" or rejuvenate with a spa treatment. This area will also boast the largest floating state-of-the-art fitness center with work out equipment, classes like Pilates, yoga & something new called Kinesis - a full body, no impact workout. There's even a Vitality Cafe there with healthy snack, entrees, smoothies and juices.

Another neighborhood will be the "Pool and Sports Zone" with multiple pools, the H2O Zone - a water park, two FlowRiders, our rock climbing walls and a lot more.

Can you believe these ships will even feature a Zip Line nine decks high? Even the entertainment areas will be kicked up a few notches - besides our large theater for Broadway-like shows and our Studio B ice skating shows, there will be many small, intimate venues such as Jazz on 4 and Comedy Live. Something really unique is our "Loft Suites" - 2,000 square feet of multilevel living space with floor-to-ceiling windows. Can you believe that many of the inside staterooms will have balconies? These will be open to the sky.

FamilyTravelGurus: Wow! We can't wait to sail on one of these ships! You had mentioned to us that the two new ships will each have an onboard nursery - from what age will you take infants in the nursery and how is time in the nursery pre-reserved??

We will take infants ages six months and older (which is the minimum age requirement to board our ships). The nursery will be first of its kind on the seas. We are still working out all the details regarding how passengers will reserve time for their children.

FamilyTravelGurus: We specialize in family travel - what else about a Royal Caribbean cruise makes it a good choice for families?

Royal Caribbean is great for families, especially multi-generational because we have something for everyone. For kids we have 5 different programs based on their ages at Adventure Ocean. These are fun and include education at the same time. They can learn about oceanography, theater, art and more. We even have supervised programs for teenagers and many areas of dedicated space for them such as "Fuel", their own nightclub and "The Living Room", a day time gathering area. We are partnered with Fischer Price (so there are lots of toys for the little ones), Crayola, Mattel, Lowes. Oh, and we now have Wii and Guitar Hero.

For the adults, did you know that we have over 200 activities they can participate in daily? Everything from the expected "Bingo", to seminars on a variety of topics, art auctions, culinary demonstrations. For joint family activities, I love the miniature golf (a real challenge), and there's the sports area, the swimming pools and our flexible restaurant venues. I guess what I'm saying is that some family members can decide to climb the rock wall, while others can enjoy a book in our library or quiet adults only Solarium. Yet, they can enjoy lots of activities together.

FamilyTravelGurus: Tell us about the new Royal Caribbean vacation packages that include a stay at Universal Studios Orlando

We have recently teamed up with Universal to offer our guests "Way More Than a Cruise" by combining their 3 or 4 night Bahamas cruise aboard the Monarch of the Seas or their 7 night Freedom of the Seas cruise with 3 or 4 night stay at Universal Orlando. The packages include everything - hotel, park entrance, all transfers and the cruise. Our passengers will be picked up at the airport and hotel/pier, between hotel and theme parks and between Port Canaveral and hotel/airport. There are 3 themed, AAA 4-diamond hotels that we work with. An

extra benefit is the "Universal Express" which allows them to skip the lines at the theme park! There's also a more economical option our passengers can choose from three nearby hotels that aren't located in the park. So, this package is affordable to everyone's budget.

FamilyTravelGurus: What are your plans for Europe in 2009 and 2010? How do your European cruises differ from your competitors?

Royal Caribbean continues to have more ships in Europe than any other cruise line. That means that consumers have more options of itineraries to pick from and more flexibility with their schedules. Some unique destinations for us will include Dubai and also Iceland.

FamilyTravelGurus: What are you offering in Alaska in 2009 and 2010? Do you recommend a Royal Caribbean "cruise tour" for Alaska visitors?

This season will offer the Radiance of the Seas doing seven night Hubbard Glacier itineraries (Seward to Vancouver or Vancouver to Seward), the Rhapsody of the Seas offering seven night Sawyer Glacier cruise (round trip Seattle) and the Serenade of the Seas seven night Sawyer Glacier (round trip Vancouver). For people with a little more time, Radiance does have two 11 night sailings starting in San Diego and finishing in Vancouver. Also Serenade of the Seas has a 14 night Ultimate Alaska which starts in San Francisco and ends in Vancouver.

I definitely recommend a Royal Caribbean cruise tour! I did a Cruisetour four years ago and it was a great way to see the interior parts of the state and get up close and personal to the wildlife. Our Wilderness Express train cars are the best; they have see-through, glass-domes cars with 360 degree views. Really comfy reclining and rotating leather seats. Also a great outdoor viewing platform. The tour is 100% escorted by our Adventure Specialist and they are your personal tour guides, historian, archeologists and all around "hosts" . You don't have to worry about a single thing.

FamilyTravelGurus: We understand you have some exciting new cruise options sailing from the West Coast. We recently sailed on the Mariner of the Seas out of L.A. - will that ship be sailing 7 night cruises year round? And what do you have planned for the Radiance of the Seas?

Yes, the Mariner of the Seas will be cruising year round from Los Angeles. The Radiance of the Seas will be sailing from San Diego starting this fall. We're very excited about this because first of all, San Diego is such a fun city that many people will decide to stay in San Digo pre and post their cruise. Also we have added some longer itineraries that include some destinations we haven't visited before such as Manzanillo, Ixtapa and Acapulco. There's going to be 4/5 night cruises for those with limited vacation time and also.

FamilyTravelGurus: Finally, what has been your favorite Royal Caribbean cruise and what made that cruise special?

My favorite cruise was an eight night Mediterranean Cruise on the Brilliance of the Seas that my husband and I took two and a half years ago. It started in Barcelona which is a beautiful, friendly city. We visited Marseille , Ville Franche (and took the local bus into Nice for lunch), also the island of Corsica, Rome and Naples and also Tunis (North Africa). My husband was celebrating a special birthday and we met some really great people on the cruise; including a couple from Scotland and another from Spain who we spent time with. We had never visited these countries before and the cruise allowed us to sample all in a short period of time. Most memorable destination was the excursion we took to Sorrento and Pompeii (from Naples). Sorrento was postcard pretty. The cruise made us decide that we'd definitely like to visit Italy again.

FamilyTravelGurus: Thanks Michelle. We look forward to sailing on your new ships and to some of these new itineraries soon!

*Interested in a Carnival Cruise with your family? We can help! Contact us at [info@familytravelgurus.com](mailto:info@familytravelgurus.com)*

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