

Churchill & Turen Ltd.

THE LOSER, IDIOT'S, SLOVENLY, DUMMY GUIDE TO CRUISING FOR MORONS

I was hanging out at Border's last Sunday, wandering the stacks soaking up the scent of poets, honest writers, and earnest yeoman journalists on a suitably gray day, when I noticed something different. These big yellow and black and orange and blue books kept popping up in the nonfiction sections. They all had titles that were hard to pick up because they were directed at "idiot's", "dummies", and "morons".

Since I feel that I can easily claim status in each of these categories, I looked over as many of these guidebooks for the terminally inept as I could handle. There was a book entitled "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Quark Theory" and another one called "Tournament Chess for the Mentally Deficient". I don't much like branding people with names and I certainly don't understand why people who are idiot's ought to be studying Quark theory or why morons should be fooling around with tournament chess. They should stick with what they do best and remain in politics.

But it did dawn on me that I have been missing the proverbial boat by not writing a book about cruising for people who are so stupid that they should never be allowed to stray more than a half mile from home. Judging by our bookstores, there is a real market for this sort of thing, a guide for morons who want to cruise. So I've decided to write one. It's still in the draft stages, but I thought I'd share some of the highlights with you today. Here's my section on "Cruise Pricing".

Don't Spend a Lot of Time Reading the Ads in the Sunday Newspaper:

Most of the ads are for mega-ships sailing to the Caribbean. Smaller cruise lines may not spend the \$10,000 and up that a nice ad costs in the Tribune. Yet, some of the most interesting cruises available do not sail the Caribbean and are not on mega-liners. Ask your agent about small niche and non-traditional lines. If you live in the western suburbs, you may find some aspects of the big ships to be directed at the same audience that thought that the TV show Hee Haw was a documentary.

Don't Believe the Prices You see in Cruise Ads

Few industry's have as much deceptive advertising as the cruise industry or as much fine print. The biggest trick is print a phony price like \$599 or \$799 and pretending that you can have a great cruise at that price. In fact, most cruise prices do not include airfare to get you to and from the port and the prices do not include port charges. Also remember that nearly every ship has bad cabins that are normally the last to sell. These cabins may be just under the casino which is

Churchill & Turen Ltd.
Copyright 1999 Churchill & Turen Ltd.
www.traveltruth.com
1-800-445-7979

Churchill & Turen Ltd.

open until the wee hours of the morning, or just under the jogging track where the Los Angeles jog over your ceiling at 6:00 am.

You're going to spend eleven hundred to fifteen hundred dollars a person for anything like a decent cruise for a week.

Do understand that Cruising is the Best Vacation You can get for the Money

The alternative is far more costly. Let's say, for example, that you wanted to spend spring break at the Four Seasons Resort on the island of Nevis. This is a very nice resort and they do spritz Evian water on your face as you lie on the beach. (As we do this exercise, remember that Evian is \$1.85 a bottle. That's important). If you are going to travel during the last week in March, for example, the Four Seasons will charge you \$575.00 per night for your room. That comes to \$4,025. But wait. You have to add in a hotel tax. And you have to fly to Nevis (or the nearby airport on St. Kitts). Let's say the airfare is going to be another \$500 per person plus about \$2,200 per person for the room. Then you need to buy food for the week. You'll probably be taking most of your meals at the hotel, let's conservatively estimate \$75 per person per day. That's \$525 per person.

So, here's what we've got for a one week Caribbean vacation:

Hotel	\$2,200.00
Airfare	\$500.00
Food	\$525.00
Basic Vacation =	\$3,225.00 Per Person.

Now all that price buys you is a room without an ocean view, a plane ride, and your meals. For the same price, **two people** could fly to a magnificent new ship and sail away to the Caribbean with all meals, entertainment, etc. included. That's half the price of the Four Seasons on a First Class ship. In a nutshell, that's why cruising is so popular.

Don't Assume that A Sale is a Sale

Those special "40% off" and "Two for One" offers are almost always deceiving because they refer to a tariff price that no one ever pays. Most cruise lines pull out the normally free airfare before dividing the next fare by two to get a "Two for One". Truth in advertising ought to require that they state "Two for One minus your airfare".

Buy your cruise from a reputable agent and travel when and where you want to go. If you wait for a "Sale" you will save very little money and you may have to settle for a less than satisfying cruise experience. Beware of "off-season" discounts. It is a false saving to travel during the hurricane season or up to Alaska when it is cold and rainy to save a hundred or so dollars. In fact, prices fluctuate seasonally much less than most consumers would assume.

Don't Assume that the "Cruise Lines are in Trouble" and wait for a "Fire Sale"

During it's first nine months last year, Carnival Cruise Lines earned \$451 million. Royal Caribbean earned \$124 million, and the third largest line, Princess,

Churchill & Turen Ltd.

Copyright 1999 Churchill & Turen Ltd.

www.traveltruth.com

1-800-445-7979

Churchill & Turen Ltd.

earned more than \$100 during just the first half of 1996. The "Big Three" now share more than 60% of the total cruise berths in North America and they are experiencing their highest profits and highest occupancy rates in history.

If anything, cruise pricing, like airfares, will be creeping upwards in 1997. But unlike the airlines, cruise lines can still depend on a second tier of profit that comes from on-board purchases and gambling. Don't feel sorry for the cruise industry - profits have never been higher.

Although it is true that the major lines will be taking delivery of a bevy of new ships during the next 36 months, several in the 100,000 Gross Ton range, the "oversupply" that some consumers assume will take place may not develop. On September 30th, the SOLAS 97 safety standards go into effect, making a fair number of older cruise ships obsolete. Rather than commit millions in reconstruction to make these older ships comply with the new ship building codes, approximately 25% of the North American fleet will be taken out of service. This should compensate for the new ships coming on line to maintain a fairly steady inventory of ship berths.

Don't Plan One of the Most Expensive Purchases of the Year with a Faceless 800 Number

O.K. let's see if this makes sense. You can buy through a local person who you might run into at Jewel or Dominick's. Are they more likely to rip you off than someone you will never meet at the end of an 800 line somewhere in Florida or California. And what happens if you are ripped off by an out-of-state huckster? Is the Illinois Attorney General going to be of much help?

And why would the cruise lines give an agency in one state better pricing than agencies in another state? The answer, of course, is they don't.

Actually, I don't think I'm ever going to finish writing my book for dummies and morons. I'd rather hang around with people of superior intelligence - like the readers of this space.

Churchill & Turen Ltd.

Copyright 1999 Churchill & Turen Ltd.

www.traveltruth.com

1-800-445-7979