

TRAVEL

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THE ITINERARY

Compiled by Dianna Hunt



The spa entrance on the Celebrity Eclipse
Celebrity Cruises/Simon Brooke-Webb

Savings on the high seas

Just in time for International Spa Week this week, Celebrity Cruises is offering special onboard spa package deals. The deals, in partnership with Elemis Spa, include:

■ Facial rejuvenation package, which includes a Botox treatment for crow's feet, an oxydermy facial, brow sculpting and a skin assessment, for \$449 (usually \$564)

■ Detox and body package, which includes a full-body seaweed massage, use of a thermal suite (like a sauna) for seven days, Pilates, yoga and a body composition analysis, for \$245 (usually \$417).

■ Pain management package, which includes three acupuncture treatments, use of the thermal suite for seven days and an herbal consultation, for \$399 (usually \$634).

The deals are good through the end of the year. www.celebritycruises.com (click on "specials").



Elvis circa 1956 is the focus of an art contest.
The Associated Press

Get creative, Elvis fans

Attention, Elvis fans: Elvis Presley Enterprises is holding a national art contest to celebrate Elvis Week 2011. You can win a free trip to Memphis — and lots more Elvis-related goodies — by submitting an entry in any art form, including sculpture, pencil drawings or painting. The art needs to honor Elvis in 1956 — 55 years ago — when he began his rise to superstardom, according to the contest planners. The winner also will receive tickets for Viva ELVIS by Cirque du Soleil in Las Vegas, a cabin on the 2012 Elvis cruise and a radio package from Sirius XM. Deadline for entries is April 28. Elvis.com

Hackers visit TripAdvisor

The travel site TripAdvisor (www.tripadvisor.com) says hackers broke into its database and stole part of its 20 million-member e-mail list. Some members might start receiving unwanted spam as a result. TripAdvisor wouldn't say how many members were affected, only that "a portion" of e-mail addresses were taken, and passwords remain secure. TripAdvisor, owned by Expedia Inc., is one of the world's largest Internet travel sites. It provides links to hotel booking sites and is best-known for the millions of reviews its users post about their hotel experiences. It doesn't collect credit card information or sell or rent its member list. TripAdvisor is a part of TripAdvisor Media Group, which includes 18 travel sites, among them www.airfare-watchdog.com, www.bookingbuddy.com, www.cruise critic.com and www.virtualtourist.com. The sites operate in 27 countries.

— The Seattle Times

FUN FACT

Top 10 riverboat cruises

Looking for a new kind of boat excursion? Here's ShermansTravel.com's list of the best places to take a riverboat cruise.

1. Amazon River
2. Danube River
3. Hudson River and St. Lawrence Seaway
4. Mekong River
5. Mississippi River
6. Murray River
7. Nile River
8. Seine River
9. Volga River and Russian waterways
10. Yangtze River

— Houston Chronicle



The Royal Clipper is the largest and only five-masted full-rigged sailing ship in the world.

Special to the Star-Telegram/Debra Dunning Brouillette

Classic Clipper

Sailing the Caribbean on a smaller craft makes for a more relaxing journey, with stops at less-crowded ports of call

By Debra Dunning Brouillette
Special to the Star-Telegram

We were about to set sail from Bridgetown, Barbados, aboard the Royal Clipper, the largest and only five-masted fully rigged sailing ship in the world. Along with most of its passengers, my traveling companion and I gathered on the top deck to witness the raising of 56,000 square feet of sails, not by motor, but by the hands of trained sailors.

Illuminated by the moon and countless stars and accompanied by Vangelis' *Conquest of Paradise* over the PA system, it was a majestic sight, one that was repeated each evening as we embarked for yet another island destination.

For the next seven nights, the Royal Clipper was our floating hotel. Our Windward Islands itinerary covered over 700 nautical miles and visited six ports, including St. Lucia, Dominica, Antigua, St. Kitts, Iles des Saintes and Martinique.

While large for a sailing ship, the Royal Clipper is in the "small ship" category (500 passengers or fewer) as far as cruises go. It carries a maximum of 227 passengers and is crewed by an international staff of 106, with 15 nations represented. Its smaller sister ships, the Star Clipper and Star Flyer, carry 170 passengers and are crewed by 72.

Dwarfed by the mega cruise ships, which travel the seas under electrical power carrying up to 5,000 passengers, the Royal Clipper harks back to the tall ships of days

gone by. Mikael Krafft, Swedish born owner-founder of Star Clippers, fulfilled his lifelong dream of reviving the golden age of tall sailing ships in 1991, with the construction of the Star Flyer, followed by its identical twin, Star Clipper, a year later. In 2001, the Royal Clipper set sail, inspired by the Preussen, launched in 1902 as the largest, fastest sailing ship the world had ever seen.

It's a powerful draw for romantics, sailing enthusiasts and active travelers who want a small-ship experience with its smaller, out-of-the-way ports of call and low-key nightly entertainment.

Cabins

Our outside cabin, located on the second deck, was attractive and efficiently designed to maximize storage space. Each cabin has its own controls for the A/C, a TV for those who can't bear to miss the news of the world, a safe for locking up valuables, a roomy marble bathroom, and surprisingly comfortable beds. Every afternoon, as we returned to our cabin from the day's activities, we found a different animal created from towels awaiting us on the bed. The cabin stewards were not only efficient but extremely creative as well.

Passengers prone to seasickness should come prepared with medication for motion sickness — a patch or wristband — and be aware that the first and last nights at sea, those with the longest passage, are usually the rock-



Throughout the week, passengers are given the opportunity to climb up to one of the crow's-nest lookout stations for an unbelievable view.

Courtesy of Clark and Sue Hamilton



Dominica is lush, mountainous and unspoiled.

Special to the Star-Telegram/Debra Dunning Brouillette

iest. My travel companion fared quite well, with only minor queasiness on those nights, while I — the "old salt" — was not affected. To me, the nighttime movement was actually quite soothing, like being gently rocked in a cradle.

Three-story atrium

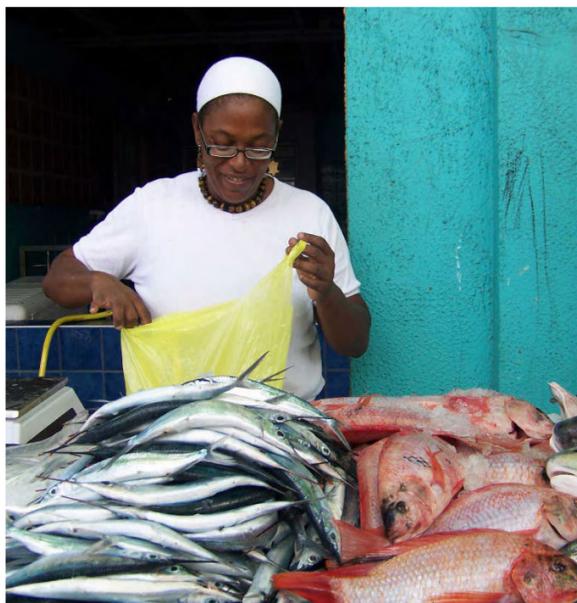
The focal point of the ship's interior public spaces is the

three-story atrium, much grander and more impressive than one would imagine inside a sailing ship. The Royal Clipper is upscale, even elegant, with its piano bar and lounge areas, which lead to the dining room on the lowest level via a winding staircase.

Dining

Many cruise-lovers put food **More on SAILING, 12E**

There's so much to savor on Martinique



Needlefish and snapper are among the day's catch at the fish market along the River Madam in Fort-de-France.

Donna Schlegelmlich

For culinary pleasures, the island c'est magnifique!

By Debra Dunning Brouillette
Special to the Star-Telegram

FORT-DE-FRANCE, Martinique — Delights for both the eyes and palate awaited us as we met our driver and guide for our day in Martinique. My friend and I were the latest "celebrities" in his charge, or at least we convinced ourselves it was so, as we stepped into his Mercedes taxi. The previous week, his VIP visitor was Ségolène Royal, French President Nicolas Sarkozy's female opponent in the 2007 election. In the late '90s, he squired Pierce Brosnan and Rene Russo during filming of *The Thomas Crown Affair*.

With limited time to experience all that Martinique has to offer, we set out to fill our senses with the sights,

sounds, and especially the tastes of this "little bit of France in the Caribbean."

En route to our first scheduled appointment at a gourmet chocolaterie, we stopped at the River Madam just as fishermen were arriving to display and sell their bounties of the sea at the fish market. Baskets overflowed with flying fish and needlefish. Tables were piled with tuna, snapper, mahi-mahi (known there as dorado); scales were at the ready. By lunchtime, chefs throughout the island would magically transform the fishermen's bounty into the gourmet fare for which Martinique has become known.

We next strolled through the nearby spice market, where vendors also display juices, fruits and vegetables, **More on MARTINIQUE, 13E**

Sailing

Continued from 11E

high on the list when it comes to rating their cruise experience, and I am no exception. Mealtimes aboard the Royal Clipper were quite satisfying and beautifully presented. Breakfast and lunch are served buffet style; the evening meal is ordered from the menu. A preview of the evening's six-course menu in the Piano Bar, complete with plated examples of the starters, entrees, and desserts, was a nice touch. Wine at dinner could be ordered by the glass or bottle; open bottles were re-corked and marked for serving the next evening.

Open seating and casual dress (no jackets, ties or eveningwear required; no shorts or swimsuits) kept mealtimes relaxed. Two delightful solo female travelers from Canada became our dinner companions, and crew members and other passengers sometimes joined us.

Activities

Passengers became familiar with the ship's cruise director, Angela, soon after boarding, as she oriented us to life on the ship. She continued throughout the week to provide briefings on all the ports, as well as make announcements about on-board events throughout the day and evening in three languages — English, German, and French.

our cabin each afternoon outlined the next day's schedule. Two special events involved photographing the ships under full sail. We sailed alongside one of the smaller sister ships, the Star Clipper, on the second morning of the cruise. We learned that passengers are afforded this opportunity on most cruise weeks in the Caribbean. Later in the week, all who wished to photograph our own ship, the Royal Clipper, under full sail boarded one of two tender boats that circled the ship until dusk, allowing shutterbugs like me to capture plenty of images.

One opportunity I missed was to climb the mast to one of the crow's-nest lookout stations. Another was to soak up the wealth of knowledge offered by a marine biologist, who gave on-ship lectures on marine life and schooled snorkelers on fish identification.

Early birds could start out most days with yoga or morning gymnastics. A spa and fitness center on the bottom deck awaited those who chose to either pamper themselves with a spa treatment or work out while sighting fish through the portholes.

Watersports enthusiasts could enjoy snorkeling, sunfish sailing, waterskiing, and windsurfing. Scuba diving for certified divers and Discover Diving instruction was available at additional charge.

Night owls gathered in the Tropical Bar after dinner to take in the evening's entertainment, beginning

at 10 p.m.

Ports of call

A variety of shore excursions were offered to passengers. Sign-ups were requested at the excursion desk by noon the previous day. At some ports, tender service was provided to both beach and town locations. Those who chose to enjoy a beach day could take advantage of water sports activities, while others arranged taxi tours on their own or walked to nearby shops and sights.

St. Lucia

The ship's first anchorage was Rodney Bay on St. Lucia's northwest coast. As we arrived, St. Lucian families were enjoying Sunday at the beach, frolicking in the sea and playing in the sand. Chicken and pig tails, a common Caribbean comfort food, sizzled on a grill as we made our way to Pigeon Point National Park, site of the remnants of Fort Rodney. We climbed to the lookout point where British Adm. George Rodney monitored the French fleet on Martinique, ending in a 1782 battle when the British emerged victorious, gaining control of the island.

Dominica

Lush, unspoiled, and largely covered by rain forest, Dominica (Do-muh-NEEK-uh), known as "the Nature Island," was our second port of call. My friend and I chose an excursion to Trafalgar Falls, twin waterfalls in the midst of the forest, followed by snorkeling at



Visitors learn the process of making batik fabrics at the Caribelle Batik factory in St. Kitts.

Special to the Star-Telegram/Debra Dunning Brouillette

Champagne Beach. Rated among the top five snorkeling sites in the Caribbean, Champagne Beach's underwater geothermal springs vent gasses, giving snorkelers the feeling of swimming through a giant glass of champagne.

Antigua

Antigua bills itself as having 365 beaches, "one for every day of the year," and is a haven for sailors. We marveled at multimillion-dollar mega-yachts docked at Falmouth Harbor, including the Maltese Falcon, one of the largest privately owned sailing yachts in the world. While others learned of Antigua's Royal Navy history at Nelson's Dockyard, swam with stingrays, or participated in a yacht race, we opted for an afternoon excursion exploring the coastal mangrove ecosystem by kayak,

then hiked to the top of Bird Island and snorkeled the nearby reefs.

St. Kitts

Among the sites not to be missed on St. Kitts is Brimstone Hill Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, considered to be the best-preserved historical fortress in the Caribbean and the Americas. The Caribelle Batik Studios, at Romney Manor, is another must-see, where we learned how batik fabrics are created and shopped for souvenirs. Then we strolled the lush gardens on land originally owned by William Jefferson, great-great-grandfather of U.S. President Thomas Jefferson. Our excursion ended at a lookout point where the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean meet on the island's east end.

Iles des Saintes

Few cruise lines visit Terre-de-Haute, Iles des Saintes, the largest in a cluster of eight small islands off the coast of Guadeloupe. After learning that its healthy reefs attract divers from around the world, I scheduled a morning dive with Royal Clippers' dive team. The ship's marina platform lowers from the stern for a variety of watersports, including scuba diving. There was still time for an afternoon of shopping and exploring the small, picturesque fishing village before the last tender boat arrived to return us to the ship.

Martinique

Our taste of France in the Caribbean continued in Martinique with a pre-arranged taxi tour, beginning with a visit to a gourmet chocolaterie and ending with a gourmet meal. Every stop was a sensory delight. We experienced the sights and sounds of the local fish market, took in the smells of spices that permeate the Big Market, then traveled through the island's mountainous

Ready to sail?

The Royal Clipper and the Star Clipper spend the winter and spring in the Caribbean, repositioning to the Mediterranean for summer and fall. Our mid-February cruise was one of the last of the Caribbean season for the Royal Clipper, but it will return in November. Caribbean itineraries include the Windward Islands, Grenadines, British Virgin Islands, Treasure Islands and Leeward Islands. The Star Flyer spends the winter and spring in Costa Rica, repositioning to the Mediterranean in the summer and fall.

How much

Cruise prices (double occupancy) for Caribbean and Costa Rican itineraries start at \$1,875; Mediterranean cruise prices begin at \$2,075. Reserve early for advance purchase discounts.

Getting there

Flights to Barbados from D/FW Airport on American Airlines are available daily through Miami. Direct flights from D/FW on American Airlines depart Thursdays, Saturdays and Mondays. U.S. dollars and/or major credit cards were readily accepted on Barbados and the six islands we visited. On the French islands of Isles des Saintes and Martinique, euros are needed for purchases from some local vendors, but they can easily be obtained via an ATM.

More info

For more detailed information, visit www.starclipper.com. Access the Voyage Planning Tool under "Plan Your Sailing" to search for a cruise by sailing month, length of cruise, by ship, or by destination.

— Debra Dunning Brouillette

countryside to the island's unique Balata Gardens. Our special day in Martinique ended at gourmet French restaurant La Cave a Vins, a hidden gem in the heart of capital Fort-de-France.

Hot Spots and Hideaways Your Guide To That Perfect Getaway



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Vendor displays at the spice market in Fort-de-France include handcrafted dolls dressed in native plaid dresses. Special to the Star-Telegram/Debra Dunning Brouillette

Martinique

Continued from 11E

along with handicrafts — dolls dressed in native plaid dresses and brooms made of palm fronds.

This very French yet very Caribbean island has begun to take center stage in recent years among the area's tourist destinations, and its inclusion on Royal Clipper's Windward Islands itinerary allowed me to find out firsthand what the fuss is all about.

Accolades for its fabulous food were received in 2008 and 2009, when the island was named Best Gourmet Island of the Year by *Caribbean World* magazine. *Caribbean Travel & Life* readers named it favorite Caribbean destination for delectable dining in 2009, and About.com's travel site gave the island a thumbs-up in 2010, calling Martinique its Best Caribbean Destination.

Finally, it was time for our appointment with "le chocolat" at gourmet chocolaterie, Frères Lauzèa. Brothers Thierry and Jimmy Lauzèa are the owners and overseers of the shop, which produces creative candy varieties made from dark, milk and white chocolate ganache. Ginger, rum raisin, lime, coffee, guava, soursop, mint, honey, cinnamon, and hot pepper are some of more than 30 natural flavors combined with the decadent, top-quality chocolate, then stamped with identifying designs made from colored cocoa butter that are, in themselves, pieces of art. A more appropriate gift for the chocoholic in your life could not be found.

We next headed north of Fort-de-France through Martinique's mountainous countryside, stopping briefly at Balata Church, a one-fifth replica of Paris' Sacred Heart Basilica, before arriving at the Balata botanical gardens. Formerly part of a private estate, the gardens were created by Jean-Philippe Thoze, a botanical and landscape gardener, over a span of two decades. Its dramatic displays of hundreds of varieties of tropical flowers and trees are in keeping with the island's Carib Indian name, Madinina, which means "Isle of Flowers." We strolled along flower-bedecked paths, then gingerly made our way across 50-foot-high suspended wooden bridges that stretch over the tops of hundred-year-old trees for breathtaking bird's-eye views of the



High-quality chocolates in more than 30 flavors are overlaid with artistic designs at Frères Lauzèa. Special to the Star-Telegram/Debra Dunning Brouillette

Getting there

Flights on American Airlines from D/FW to San Juan, Puerto Rico (SJU) connect daily to Martinique (FDF) via American Eagle.

magnificent gardens below.

Our day in Martinique ended with lunch at the highly recommended La Cave a Vins, in the heart of downtown Fort-de-France. We chose a table in the sunny conservatory, featuring glass skylights and beautiful wall murals of French wine country. As we sipped our wine (French, of course!), delightful owner Clementine Grouvel graciously translated the menu descriptions into English. Starters of octopus salad and casserole of sea urchins were followed by our entrees. Portions of tuna that Grouvel had purchased that morning at the fish market were seared rare and topped with a Rossini sauce of warm foie gras and morel mushrooms.

Feeling sated in every way, I re-boarded our ship with dreams of returning to this welcoming French Caribbean island for a longer stay. There are rum distilleries to tour, the ruins of Mount Pelée's 1902 eruption to explore, and more gastronomic pleasures to experience. Martinique had quickly made its way into my heart (and stomach).

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Japan	0.013	0.011
Mexico	0.090	0.076
Hong Kong	0.141	0.117
Switzerland	1.179	1.022

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Advertorial

TRAVEL COLUMN



Debbie Barrera-Ruiz
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Catalonia Riviera Maya

In the heart of the Riviera Maya opposite the sea, on the Mexican Caribbean coast, we find Puerto Aventuras, the town where Catalonia Riviera Maya resort is located. Puerto Aventuras is an ideal setting with a beautiful marina for yachts and dolphin pools. Moreover, there is a vast leisure area containing bars, shops and restaurants, as well as a 9-hole golf course.

Catalonia Riviera Maya has 423 rooms, all with terraces. All rooms are equipped with: air-conditioning, direct phone line, complete bathroom with hairdryer, cable TV, safety deposit box, complimentary mini bar, coffee maker, bathrobes and slippers, plus many more amenities.



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You can have it all at the most exciting outdoor entertainment bar on the Las Vegas Strip—the **Carnival Court Bar & Grill**. Boasting some of the world's top flair bartenders, Carnival Court was voted one of the best flair bars in the country. Live bands take the Carnival Court stage daily, performing a wide range of music like pop, jazz and beach music.

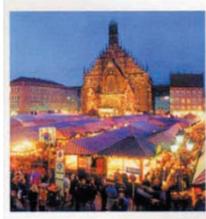
There are many great kiosks selling everything from sunglasses and clothing to hotdogs and pretzels. Hours are Sunday - Thursday 12pm to 1am Friday-Saturday 12pm to 3am.

Bally's Las Vegas Light, Water & Sound Show

Experience a brilliant light, water and sound extravaganza on Las Vegas Boulevard at the entrance to Bally's Hotel & Casino. Shows are every 20 minutes nightly after dusk.

You can book a package of roundtrip nonstop air and hotel from DFW with the **Travel Guy at 1-888-272-8002** or go online at www.travelguy.com. The Travel Guy has lots of coupons and he will also do your seat assignments for you on the plane.

CHRISTMAS MARKETS on the Danube River December 2 - 11, 2011



Christmas Markets in Nuremberg



Shop for handmade crafts

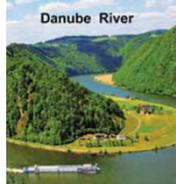


Linz, Austria

Ready for a magical Christmas season that you will long remember and cherish? A very special trip for very special people!

Join owners, Tom & Rita Paul, of Pauls Cruises & Travel, for this once in-a-lifetime fairy tale Christmas event! Drift lazily up the beautiful DANUBE RIVER thru 4 countries of Europe as castles, churches, vineyards, farms & quaint little villages pass by. Plus, these charming cities will be decorated the "old fashioned" way in their Christmas lights, trees, holiday décor and unbelievable Christmas Markets! Shop to your heart's content in Christmas Markets in places such as **BUDAPEST, VIENNA, SALZBURG, REGENSBURG, NURMBERG** and **PRAGUE**.

This 9 night deluxe package features a 7 night river cruise as well as an extended 2 night stay at a deluxe hotel in Prague to allow time to explore and shop this exciting city. To really keep you in the holiday spirit - special onboard music, folklore shows, theme dinners, tree decorating, Christmas carols & other events await.



Danube River

This inclusive adventure includes all shore excursions, meals onboard, champagne breakfasts daily, and even unlimited wine, beer or soft drinks with dinner!

The Riverboat holds less than 150 passengers, so do not wait and be disappointed - special group space is limited! Call your friends at Pauls Cruises & Travel NOW! In the NE Mall area/Mid-Cities @ 817-589-7447 or visit them at 941 Melbourne, just se of NE Mall-in the

"Subway" shopping strip. In Arlington/Mansfield at 817-572-7285, located at 5767 SW Green Oaks - se corner of I-20/Green Oaks-next to Panchos. Outside of the DFW area: 800-327-3533, or e-mail Info@PaulsCruises.com. Visit their website at www.PaulsCruises.com.

Mexico

Many Texans are repeat travelers to Mexican resort destinations, especially from the DFW area. With the increasing drug violence on the border, there are several questions about safety and security for Mexico travel in general. I recently had the pleasure of meeting with the Mexico Tourism board to inquire about these issues, and they shared with me some statistics that I would like to pass on to hopefully ease any hesitations travelers may have while deciding on a vacation destination this year.

- Mexico has had 22.6 million visitors in the past 12 months
- Of the 22.6 million visitors, not one of them was hurt as the result drug-related gang violence
- No tourist of any nationality has been killed in drug-related violence anywhere in Mexico
- The Mexican government makes a considerable effort to protect U.S. citizens and other visitors to major tourist destinations
- In a survey conducted by four operators with customers who just returned from a Mexican vacation found that 94% of its respondents were satisfied with their vacation, and 97% of travelers would return to Mexico for vacation

I was told that the only worries one should have with traveling to Mexico are:

- Getting so tanned that you would have to spend extra money on aloe vera gel
- Heartburn from overeating so many delicious foods
- Having so much fun that you might forget to check your facebook

Finally, be a smart traveler, use common sense, be respectful, pack your bags, call your travel agent, and enjoy Mexico!