



E.T. Robbins

PHOTO ABOVE: Cunard, The Most Famous Ocean Liners in the World. PHOTO BELOW: Crystal Cruises, Avenue Saloon.

Step back into a golden era. Splash in turquoise waters. Marvel at ice glaciers. Take part in daylong activities – snorkeling, sunbathing, and sampling sweets from a midday smorgasbord. Or stay in your cabin for as long as you want while occupied in, well, other activities. It is your honeymoon after all. What better way to launch the rest of your life together than aboard your own love boat?

Let's pretend for a moment that money is no object. Close your eyes and imagine six blissful nights at sea on a transatlantic voyage aboard the Queen Elizabeth 2, (QE2) or an intimate cruise in Tahiti on the Wind Song. Have a few extra vacation days saved up? Cruise the Pacific Northwest and experience nature at its most pristine. It's the stuff that dreams are made of, but for the next few moments, we will allow ourselves to dream big.



TRANSATLANTIC CROSSING ABOARD THE QE2

You've tasted countless wedding cakes and chicken dishes. Your mother-in-law has finally found the right dress. The wedding planner reminds you to make time for yourself the week before the wedding. Uh-huh. Then there's the actual wedding day – a whirlwind of flashing bulbs, stomach butterflies, and hugs from aunts and uncles seen only, well, at weddings.

"Spending six nights at sea on a transatlantic voyage aboard the QE2 is just what tired newlyweds need," says Gary Gerbino, vice-president of M. Silver Associates – the firm that handles PR for Cunard. "Step back in time, and feel free to relax. Stay in your cabin for the week if you want to."

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PHOTO ABOVE: Cunard QE2. PHOTO'S BELOW: Crystal Cruises, Crystal Symphony, Crystal Penthouse.

BABY, LET'S CRUISE

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With 1,184 square feet of pure magnificence in a split-level grand suite – aptly named the Queen Mary or the Queen Elizabeth – there are plenty of reasons why you should wile away the hours inside your cabin. Step onto a private balcony, go for a dip together in a marble bathtub, or enjoy the view (without worrying about the elements) from your own glass-enclosed conservatory. Invite newfound friends to sup in your dining room, or amuse yourselves with the suite's complete entertainment system.

Cunard has had regularly scheduled transatlantic service since 1840. In other words, this old and reputable company has had a lot of practice getting the details right. The QE2 boasts five-star restaurants (four of the six nights are formal, so tuxes and gowns are a must) and speed (a maximum of 32 knots), making her the fastest passenger vessel on the seas. The cost of a six-night transatlantic voyage in a grand suite is \$22,749 per person, which includes one-way business class airfare. Want to make the trip even more memorable? Try one of Cunard's European Entrée Land Tours. Either start or end your honeymoon cruise with a three- or six-night stay in London. Land prices start at \$595 per person. There are seventeen transatlantic crossings between April and December, making it easy to find a cruise to coincide with your special day.

WIND SONG STAYS ON MY MIND

Jill Sussman, owner of Vacations Etc. (Master Cruise Counselors-certified) in Framingham,

says Tahiti is a "honeymooner's dream." The best way to take in this tropical island? Aboard the Wind Song, one of Windstar's four luxury sailing yachts. According to Sussman, seven nights (plus a four-night pre/post stay in an over-water bungalow) in cabin #107 (part of the elite Owner's Suite category) will cost \$7,619 per person including airfare.

Mitchell Lange, owner of Island Cruises and Travel (certified by the Accredited Cruise Counselors) outside Chicago (check out his entertaining website: www.honeymoon-cruiseshopper.com), agrees with Sussman's choice of cruise line for a dream honeymoon, while recommending the Caribbean and Costa Rica. "It's more intimate," Lange comments, referring to the smaller ports and the fact that the largest vessel in the Windstar fleet carries approximately 300 passengers.

LAND OF THE MIDNIGHT SUN

Alaska's state flower is the forget-me-not; indeed, you won't soon forget a twelve-night Alaskan cruise aboard the Crystal Harmony. Your late-spring, summer, or

early autumn wedding is perfectly timed for one of these cruises, which run May to September. Experience midnight sun. Gawk at glaciers. Spy an orca whale. That is, if you can tear yourself away from your 948-square foot Crystal Penthouse with verandah, master bath with Jacuzzi, and of course, the all-important ocean view. Price tag? Just under twenty-two thousand, per person including airfare.

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BABY, LET'S CRUISE

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PHOTO ABOVE: Crystal Cruises, Cuisine in Crystal Dining Room. PHOTO BOTTOM, RIGHT: Cunard, The Most Famous Ocean Liners in the World.

Alaska is one of the top three cruise destinations Lange books, and it remains one of his favorite experiences.

MINDING YOUR CRUISING DETAILS

Whether it's luxurious or a special deal, here are some things to keep in mind when planning your honeymoon cruise. Make sure you are working with a travel agent who has cruising experience. Find the right agent with efficiency and ease by logging onto the Cruise Line International Associations website at www.cruising.org. From there, simply type in your zip code and faster than you can say "midnight buffet," a list of Master Cruise Counselors (MCC) or Accredited Cruise Counselors (ACC) is at your fingertips complete with email and phone numbers.

Lange offers this piece of advice: Know the activities you want in advance. Do you like on-shore excursions through majestic ruins, sunbathing on the beach or

time alone in your cabin? Does the idea of 1,700 passengers sound exciting, or would you prefer the intimacy of a yacht? Finally, of course, there's price. Although the sky was the limit for our little cruising dream, it's important to shop around. Gerbino recommends booking a cruise the moment you set your wedding date. Sussman says six to nine months out should be sufficient, adding that most cruise lines "offer better deals to early bookers...but last minute space is often available. Most often the low rates are for inside or obstructed view cabins."

Last October, Melissa Cerretani and her husband celebrated their fifth wedding anniversary with a tropical honeymoon cruise to the Caribbean. She sums up the cruising experience best, "You can get adventurous and do everything, or you don't have to do anything at all." ■