

NEW THIS ISSUE: Become The Expert Traveler with GIG GWIN

# PERSONA



## the expert traveler

Welcome to the first installment of "The Expert Traveler!" To help you take advantage of all your fantastic travel opportunities, we enlisted the aid of **Travel Specialist, Gig Gwin** to create this column. "The Expert Traveler" will share useful tips and vacation ideas to help you get the most out of your Persona travel experiences. So bon voyage, happy trails and get going!

NIKKI WASHINGTON, EDITOR

### In the Mood for a Cruise

Depending on where you are, you have just settled into your winter coat or you're already tired of it. Either way, the cold is coming and now is the time to start planning to escape to a romp in the sun and some sea on the side.

Cruises in the high season (January through March) fill up fast and are more expensive. But the break from the snow and single-digit temperatures makes them worth every penny.

Cruises to more distant destinations like Aruba, Barbados and Martinique in the Southern Caribbean and Panama Trans-Canal can last up to 14 days. Popular shorter cruises (say four or five days, to an island in the Bahamas) are very affordable, around \$500 to \$700 per person.)

Here are some things to keep in mind as you plan for your winter season cruise:

■ **Book reservations now.** The coming season is the busiest time for cruise lines. Make plans early to get your first choice of ship, destination and cabin.

■ **When planning your cruise, consider the formality of the ship.** Some lines are known for their luxury accommodations, and an upscale ship means upscale dressing. If you're more comfortable in your cut-offs and a T-shirt, you might want to choose a more casual ship. On the

other hand, if dressing to the nines is your idea of fun, then the ultra-luxury lines are for you.

■ **Take the insurance.** During booking, most cruise lines offer special cruise insurance to their passengers. This insurance (which can range anywhere from \$50 to \$150, depending upon the length of your cruise) could save you thousands of dollars were you to fall ill and need to leave the ship.

■ **Decide whether you'd prefer first or second seating for meals and activities when making your reservation.** If you're an early morning person, you'll prefer first seating, which generally means breakfast starts around 8 am. This early start also means that you'll be the first off the ship to enjoy ports-of-call. But don't worry if one day you oversleep; most cruises also have buffets set up so that you can help yourself to breakfast, lunch or dinner anytime.

■ **Finally, the essence of cruising is about fun and relaxation.** Any cruise you choose will be chock full of activities and exciting stops. If you're cruising for the first time, the tendency will be to pack every day as full as possible. Don't. Participate in what suits your fancy, but be sure to allow plenty of time just to enjoy the beauty and peacefulness of your ocean voyage. ■ GIG GWIN

#### PERSONA'S CRUISE LINE PARTNERS

##### MAINSTREAM

Carnival Cruise Lines

Costa Cruises

Holland America Line

Norwegian Cruise Line

Royal Caribbean Int'l

##### FAMILY

DISNEY CRUISE LINE

##### PREMIUM

Celebrity Cruise

Cunard

Princess Cruises

##### LUXURY

Seabourn Cruise Line

Windstar Cruises



**ABOUT OUR EXPERT:** Travel Specialist, Gig Gwin, (founder and CEO of Gwin's Travel in St. Louis, Missouri,) holds the distinction of being the "most traveled" travel agent in the world. According to Travelers Century Club of Los Angeles, there were 313 countries on this planet as of January 1999. Gig has visited them all — many of them numerous times. Gig's love of travel has taken him on 2,200 flights covering 2.2 million air miles, 30 cruises, innumerable trains, motor coaches, taxis, cars and even, "hoofing it" when necessary. Local transportation has involved elephants, camels, horses, mules, donkeys and an ostrich.