

TRAVEL

Typical Royal Caribbean passengers are couples in their 30s-50s, two-thirds of them from North America and the remainder from the UK and Asia. All announcements are also made in Spanish for the benefit of Latin Americans. As for South Africans, I met a handful on board. As avid bridge-players, we joined a lesson and a tournament every sea day, but with so many activities available on board, it's hard to decide how to spend your time.

One of the big benefits of cruising is that you only have to unpack your bags once. We were in a large ocean-view stateroom with a non-opening picture window. The 15,2m cabin is very cleverly designed and we had plenty of packing space – a trip with three “formal” nights out of 12 on board requires a fair bit of luggage. You can pack very little and rent outfits on board, or do as we did and take advantage of the European summer clothing sales. Remember to pack an extra case for your return flight. Emirates allows 30kg checked-in baggage per person with economy tickets.

South African passport-holders need UK and Schengen visas for Sweden. You also have to take a ship's excursion while in St Petersburg, as you'll only be able

to obtain a visa for Russia if you can prove that you'll be met and escorted by a Russian tour guide. You'll have two days and a visit to Peterhof, Peter the Great's summer palace – which is even grander than Louis XIV's palace in Versailles, France – is essential. If you enjoy art, the Hermitage Museum is another must-see, although I would have preferred to pay more and book a private tour.

Other than the Abba Museum in Stockholm, which was a lot of fun, Tallinn enchanted me most with its medieval town and market. All the images from the stories of my youth came alive there, and I imagined Hansel and Gretel leaving breadcrumbs along the cobbles, Rumpelstiltskin behind one of the windows and Dracula in the shadows at every turn. Although we missed the famous Little Mermaid statue in Copenhagen, there's a whole shop dedicated to Hans Christian Andersen in the picturesque Nyhavn area.

TO BOOK

Cruises International are efficient and friendly. Rates from \$1 799 (about R18 000) pp for 12 nights or \$150 (about R1 500) per day. Tel: 011 327 0327, email: nirosha@cruises.co.za or visit: www.cruises.co.za



CELEB EXPLORER

Hasmita Nair, well-known blogger at www.joziliciousblog.co.za, is an avid traveller and shares her style

What are your non-negotiables when travelling?

I like to be pampered when I travel, so I always pick luxury hotels. I'd rather stay home than book in anywhere that isn't clean and fairly modern. I also avoid fast food and prefer to try the local cuisine.

What beauty products do you use when travelling?

I usually use hotel-supplied body wash, shampoo and conditioner, as five-star establishments often provide premium brands. I also carry a tiny Crabtree & Evelyn hand cream and a travel-size Clinique face wash.

What was your last overseas trip? A press trip in Dubai. The week before that I was in Singapore for the Grand Prix, and the week before that I was in Mozambique on another press trip.

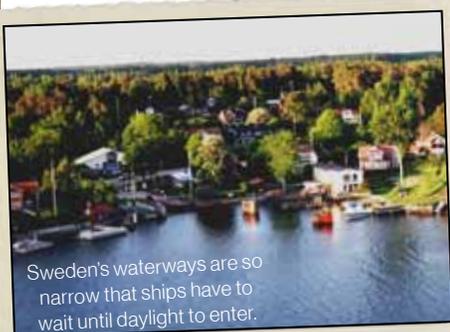
Where's your next international destination?

India. It's the only place I can afford during the peak December season – it's great value for money.

What's your favourite city? New York. I love its electric vibe and the way everyone walks with a purpose. Whether you're into music, food, art or fashion, there's something for everyone.

What's your favourite travel app? Triplt consolidates all my travel plans in an easily accessible format. I can forward my entire itinerary to family and even check whether flights are running on time.

What are your top travel tips? Take an extra pillow and try to book exit-row seats in the aircraft for more legroom. Before paying a travel agent, try researching flight and hotel prices on your own – you'll find a better deal 90% of the time. – ATLEHANG RAMATHESELE



Sweden's waterways are so narrow that ships have to wait until daylight to enter.

A city landmark: the white façade of the impressive Hotel d'Angleterre, Copenhagen.



There's a lot to see in Sweden's Gothenburg, where residents and visitors use bicycles even during winter.