

My family and I sailed the Explorer of the Seas on September 1-8, 2001. We had a DB Ocean view stateroom with balcony #7298. We've sailed on 3 different Carnival cruises and this review is based on that comparison, as well as what happened to us during our cruise.

In our cabin the bed was a queen size bed, and then the third bed folded out from the ceiling above the bed. It was very cozy for the three of us. I would think that this cabin could hold 4 people, but definitely not more than that comfortably.



We live in So Cali, so we had to leave Friday morning to stay the night in Miami before we cruised. We'd purchased the package to fly and sail, so we flew to Miami, and stayed at the Hyatt, which was just a stone's throw from the ship itself. The next morning, we wake up, and I panicked because I'd lost my birth certificate. My mom had happened to carry an extra one on hand (thank heavens). We later learned from the customs agent that a passport is the best and easiest way to travel.



We had come with birth certificates, marriage licenses, and all sorts of name changes and affidavits. He said we did things the hard way.

The Hyatt was a nice hotel and the rooms were comfortable. There was a restaurant downstairs which charged a lot for food, so I'd recommend going outside the hotel and finding a great local place. You will get better service and food for less.





On Saturday, we arrived at the port at 10am, and were on the ship at 11am. It was a simple check in, the longest part was the checking in, getting the Seapass card, and getting our picture taken for the card. It's how they check to make sure you don't have someone else's card when you arrive back from port. I had switched cards with my mom one time and they stopped me from boarding back on to the ship. The first hour I walked around on the ship, I literally just said WOW. I'd been on beautiful ships before.



When I'd seen atriums before, I thought I heard angels singing when I stood on the bottom and looked up, but then again I'd never been in the Magellan dining room (or which ever one is on deck 3). I was glad I had my camera because this dining room took my breath away. Ok, it didn't have a chandelier, but it was still gorgeous. My family and I didn't like our table assignment so we got another one from Harry and Kristen doing the table assignments. Thanks guys! They gave us a table overlooking the balcony from deck 5. We were able to see all of the dancing waiter shows and all of the excitement from where we were. It was a great table.



We had our luggage within a few hours, we unpacked and I was surprised that my 2 formals didn't get wrinkled at all. The mustard drill went great. We took little bottles of gray poupon with us, and lots of people thought that was great! Then we went up to deck 12, just above the main pool in the middle of the ship to watch us pull out of Miami. You have to see this. See, the ship is SO HUGE that people watch it pull out, so intently that they cause traffic accidents. It's really neat to see, most people wave and honk at you, and just wave back, they're all jealous.

Once sailing, the ship never really rocked. Actually it didn't rock all week. I barely have sea legs. We had to go to the 2nd seating for dinner that night, but it really wasn't that bad. We met up with really nice people that we kept running into during the cruise. The food overall was better on this ship than the others I'd been on. I'd read reviews where people said it wasn't good. I can't see what they had. Maybe I'm just not hard to please.

The wait staff was friendly and efficient. If you didn't like an item they'd happily give you another entrée.



Every night I went to the Chamber for dancing. It was a great time. I'd met up with the Seabring crew, and I made friends with them. They were my single link to fun on the ship! Thanks guys! The Chamber is decorated like a castle and the doors are automatic (from deck 3 anyhow) and you keep going in, and its because the doors opened automatically. The dance floor is somewhat smaller than other ships I'd been on. It hardly ever got crowded and the drink waters are really very friendly! They really want tips.



On Sunday we arrived in the Bahamas and found that right off of the ship there was a nice shopping town. We did a little shopping, and then learned later in the week that the town had a fire right after we left. That's really sad, but I hope that this doesn't impact your cruise. I did see similar things in St. Thomas. We tried to get room service. We ordered it for 8am. It still wasn't there by 10:00. We called to cancel it, but my family was already mad. Our room steward said he'd yell at room service for us. Owen was too good to us. We went back to the ship a bit early. It was hot in Nassau, and we didn't have anything else to see.

We thought about taking a tour, but opted just to take our own *moron tour* as Jeffrey Arpin, our cruise director called it. The weather was great all week. We had a few flaws, but overall the sun always shined, the wind was pretty steady. One day we tried to go to the bow with 45 mph winds and I almost lost my shirt. The peek a-boo bridge says **no tapping on bridge** but they didn't say **no waving**, so I waved to them and they smiled. I asked about the wind, and they told us.





See, there are instruments on the peek bridge, but no indications of wind. So I asked him. I believe the bridge (deck 11) is only open from 8am to 6pm. I tried to go up there one night but couldn't.

Also on the ship if you want to get to the bow, go to deck 4, and take the forward **exit** doors out – they're located right outside of the Palace Theatre. Walk forward to the front of the ship. There will be a staircase there, and take those stairs up and walk forward. It will be WINDY! But you can get to the bow of the ship and stand on the helipad. It was really cool. There are benches up there and on a windless night with a full moon it could be romantic.

On Monday we were at sea all day. I went ice-skating. This was great! Take long pants (jeans, leggings, slacks). They won't allow Capri's or shorts on the ice. Also, bring your own socks and sign their waiver. Then you can ice skate. There were many different levels of skating and the times for skating was scattered all throughout the day, so check your compass times.



I also did some sunning in the main pool. There are lots of kids here. There are fresh water showers right outside of the pool to rinse off. Also there is a shelf part in the pool. This is great for sitting in the pool

without having to tread water. It gets too hot to sit in your chair. You can't take any drinks in with you. Then the promenade said that they were selling loose stones for \$10 a carat. I had to buy lots of that! They people then gave me a card for a place that would set my loose stones. I was very happy. I'm a December baby, and purchased 15 carats of swiss blue topaz. This would've cost at least \$400 for the stones in Los Angeles. I'd priced them before, and they weren't that nice. That night was formal, so I got ready, then we took pictures and then went to dinner. That night's entertainment was a dancing show. The name will come to me later. I liked this show. These dancers are really great!



On Tuesday we arrived in St. Thomas and had a great view from our balcony. St. Thomas really is a beautiful island. We decided to do shopping before the excursion, so I took my stones to Diamonds International. They wanted \$175 to set my 2 earrings (5 carats total weight) and 1 pendant (10 carats) in plain basket mountings. I walked out of their store. Then I met up with a guy with really pretty eyes. He said that he had a shop right around the corner and they would set my stones for cheap. They did. They only charged me \$100 and could have them ready in 30 minutes.

While looking in that store, I found a tennis bracelet that matched my stones perfectly. The bracelet's price was \$1095. I bought it for \$175. The people were nice, and they really did make a bargain for me. My dad also purchased a Masonic ring for 90% off what the store wanted for it. I told them I'd tell all my friends about their store. That store was called West Indian Creations. They're on 33 Raadets Gade, St. Thomas. I love my stones. They're gorgeous. I also purchased an **inch of gold** special. If you buy a 21 inch necklace, you get the matching bracelet. That new necklace sports my new pendant. I got so many compliments on it.



For our excursion, we took the 1:00 pm Turtle cove Sailing & Snorkeling. It cost \$46 and Children were \$26. The excursion was a sail to Buck Island where we snorkeled and saw sea turtles. Bert, the captain of the Doubloon Ship, was great to us, and I told everyone that I would tell my friends how great he was to us. They fed us chips salsa and rum punch. They took care of us!

This was the night we saw the Ice Show. Don't miss the ice show. It really was a great show. It's amazing, especially the guy in a big wheel. They are professional skaters and really know what they're doing! I forgot I was on a ship. There is no saving of seats, and people really adhere to that. So, go early and take a sweater, It gets cold in there. This night was also the Toga Party. If you can, take safety pins, and make a Caesar Crown.



You'll be the envy of everyone at the party. This party was a blast, but it ends at 1am, so the Seabring gang and I went to the Chamber to continue dancing. Apparently, there isn't a dress code because we went dressed in sheets.

Back in our cabin, I slept in the third bed above the main cabin bed. If you have to pull out the bunk bed (which comes out of the ceiling), bring bedroom slippers because you'll have to use a ladder that hurts your feet to get into your bed. What I did was use the couch that was next to the bed, and this made my ladder contact minimal. The pegs are very small, and wearing slippers or sandals really helps.

On Wednesday we were in Puerto Rico, but my family and I didn't get off the ship. I had been out drinking way too much the night before and so I didn't want to do more shopping anyhow. I looked out the window and the Carnival Paradise was docked with us. We were on that ship on year ago. It's a gorgeous ship which used to be nonsmoking! This was the 2nd formal night. Dinner was great as usual. I don't remember what we ate on specific nights, but the food was great, no matter what. That night's entertainment was a comedy show – Brad Cummings. He was a ventriloquist using a ½-hatched dinosaur named Rex. I LOVED REX. This guy was a great show. My family and I laughed so hard we cried. Don't miss REX!





It's a nice beach. You'll need water shoes if you want to get off the ship and go to one beach that's to the left of the disembarkation point. It's the beach that's not near the wave runners. There are lots of rocks and they hurt to walk on them. Go to the wave runner beach. It's softer and the water's great.

After our tour, I did go shopping and no one grabbed me. I walked around, but didn't see anything I liked, so I left. The people did ask me to come into their shops, but I didn't go in them. It's that simple.



This night's entertainment was the Knudsen brothers. I loved these guys. I even bought their CD and had my picture taken with them. If you're lucky enough to have them on your cruise, you have to see them. They're not bad to look at either. I can't tell you what they do because that'll give away the awesome-ness of their performance. Just DO NOT MISS these guys!!!

On Thursday we went to Labadee. It was a nice island. We took the wave runner tour. It was a great way to see the island, but it's stressful to keep up with the person in front of you. You have to stay in their wake. There was one family that didn't speak English, but insisted they did. They were highly annoying. They put James (the tour guide) in jeopardy. Then we relaxed on the beach. If you want more privacy, there's a beach to go to. Once you disembark, go to the left, and walk around to the back, almost till you get to the shops, then take another left. You'll see the waves and the beach.



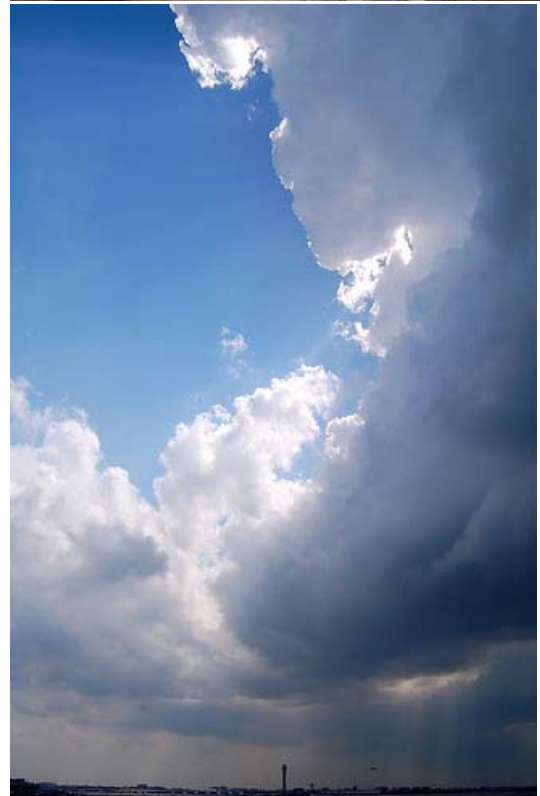
They did make beautiful things though. I just didn't have a use for their goods. As we were leaving there was a thunderstorm that hit suddenly. It was really neat. The balcony's railing did get wet, and a little bit on the floor, but the chairs didn't get wet. I sat on the patio, watched the storm, and put my makeup on for dinner.





Friday was a sad day because it was last day. It was a sea day, and I spent a lot of it last minute ship shopping. Then you had to pack, and you can't steal towels. It's almost as if they check your luggage. You have to get your colored luggage tags, and tear off the perforated edge, but I didn't understand why, because they said in order to claim your luggage you had to show them some tags, but we never showed them any tags.

On Saturday we got up, got dressed, docked, hugged goodbye to our friends, and then got off the ship. This was the best vacation I ever have had. I am totally jealous of all of you guys that are sailing on this gorgeous ship! Saturday morning we ate in the Windjammer. We were the last luggage tag color to be called and we were in the Miami airport by 11:30. If you had an early flight, the first color off the ship happened at 8:15 – 8:30. We had a late flight (5:00pm), and we got to watch a Miami thunderstorm while waiting in the cold airport.



In General, I didn't go into the kids disco, the kids' arcade, or use the babysitting facilities. I did go to Johnny Rockets. They also serve you fries and onion rings like chips and salsa before you order. You have to have a milkshake just to say you've had one. They're rich, creamy and very bad for you! I didn't go to Portofinos, but I did look out the windows of the bathrooms right outside that restaurant. It's amazing. You can watch the sea go by while washing your hands. I spoke with friends who went there and they said it was a great meal! They didn't mind the cover charge.



The palace theatre has lots of great seats. There aren't lots of poles in the way of your view. The cruise comics Rachel and Steve were so funny! There was one stunt where she dragged a chair over people in the audience. It was so funny.

In your cabin there are no shower curtains. There is also no hair conditioner. It's a shampoo/conditioner blend. Bring your own! Bring your own razor, shave cream, and toothpaste/brush. They don't have those amenities. There is a hairdryer, but it's on a coil, and it's in the main room. Bring an extension cord. Bring an alarm clock.

The sandwiches, cookies, soft serve, and pizza in the café promenade were all very good. I enjoyed a snack many a time! There's RCCL Sound Waves. It's music that plays over the intercom. It's a great idea and they play good music. It was dance, r&b, jazz and adult contemporary. I like all of that. Like I said, I'm not hard to please. There are sprinkles to be put on your ice cream (or yogurt) on deck 5, the promenade. It's in between the soft serve ice cream machine and the cafe.



When you get on and off the ship, your supercharge card has your picture on it. You can't take someone else's card to get on and off the ship. I had my moms, and my mom had mine. They wouldn't let us on until we possessed our own, and inserted it into the reader. I guess that's how they keep riffraff off the ship.



Your balconies are private. There is seriously frosted glass between you and your neighbor. You could go out there in the buff and they wouldn't see you. If you have a balcony room, take a flag or some other type of marker to tell your room when you get off the ship. That way you can take a picture and know where your room was.

Bring a marker (dry erase) to write messages to your loved ones on the mirror. That is a better idea than sticky notes. If you have any questions, contact me and I'll try to answer them as best I can. Thanks for reading this entire review!

- Jen