

# *Bask in the good life*



## Aboard *Celebrity* REFLECTION

story Laurie Wallace-Lynch photography Celebrity Cruises

Sitting by the pool on a comfy lounge chair, soaking up the warm Caribbean sun, aboard *Celebrity Reflection*, I put down my book and pick up my tall icy mango daiquiri, giving it a swirl, and slurping down the last of the sweet libation. Like magic, a friendly pool attendant appears and asks if I want another. "Sure," I say, "why not?" While I'm waiting for daiquiri two (maybe three... whose counting), just for fun I pick up my cell phone, connect to the ship's WIFI, and Google the weather back home on this mid-December day. Minus 10 degrees with a 60 percent chance of flurries, reads the Mississauga forecast.

Temperature by the pool; a balmy 85 degrees.

Should I snap a selfie of me enjoying my daiquiris IN the

pool (they serve them in tall plastic glasses) and post it on Facebook? LOL, but this life of luxury is readily available to all, and just a short flight from Toronto Pearson.

Sailing the ocean blue and exploring the world one port at a time; that's what cruising is all about. You wake up every morning at a different Caribbean island paradise awaiting exploration. Or you can stay on the ship and just relax by the pool, go for a spa treatment, or partake in any of the activities offered on board.

Cruising is like a hop-on hop-off bus whereby it's a convenient way to see the sites while you just relax and enjoy the ride, and in the case of a Celebrity Cruise, you get the bonus of fabulous food, nightly shows and friendly, top notch service.



The 10-day Ultimate Caribbean Cruise began in Fort Lauderdale, Florida and sailed to the ports of St. John's, Antigua; Bridgetown, Barbados; Castries, St. Lucia; Fort-De-France in Martinique and Charlotte Amalie in St. Thomas.

While you can just wander around the town close to where the cruise ship is docked, Celebrity Cruises offers several excursions from island tours, rum tours and beach swims to bucket list adventures like a 45-minute helicopter ride to the Montserrat Volcano in Antigua.

In St. Johns, Antigua we chose to sail on a catamaran, the warm Caribbean breezes blowing in our hair as we dried off after an exhilarating snorkel adventure where we were surrounded by colourful fish. The catamaran then set anchor in the shallow waters of a private sandy beach so we could hop off and lie on the beach or swim in the salty turquoise sea.

In Bridgetown, Barbados we signed up for the Underwater Explorations package, called Dr. Ellen Prager's Ocean Discoveries on board the Atlantis Submarine! Our group of about 18 people hopped onto a ferry, which took us to a floating platform where the submarine submerged. We climbed backwards down the hatch and into the bowels of the submarine.

Rows of oval shaped windows lined each side of the sub as passengers quickly took their seats facing the windows. You could hear the sound of the sub's engine fire up as bubbles blew by the window and we were off. Deeper and deeper we dove—150 feet below the surface, while the captain pointed out interesting sites such as a sunken shipwreck and unique coral reefs. Kids and adults alike shrieked with delight when a giant sea turtle swam close to the sub as if showing off for the paying clientele.

St. Lucia is the second largest of the Lesser Antilles' Windward Islands boasting rugged beauty and a magnificent shoreline. Forested volcanic mountains give way to gently sloping valleys lush with banana plantations. Here you can take a cooking class, go on the Dolphin and Whale Watching, wander the historic streets or tour a rum factory.

In Fort-De-France, visitors get a chance to practice their French as you chat with locals selling handmade crafts. French Martinique is one of the largest Caribbean islands measuring 425 square miles with lush tropical flora, while the mountainous terrain is covered with banana plantations, pineapple and sugar cane fields.





St. Thomas offers some of the best duty-free shopping in the Caribbean with street after street of luxury jewellery and clothing shops.

After all this non-stop adventure (including shopping), there's nothing better than heading back to the ship for some R&R. This can involve cooling off with a swim and the cocktail-of-the-day, heading to the casino, going for afternoon tea or any of the other dozens of activities offered each day on board.

One of the most memorable activities offered on board was the "Heartbeat of the Operation" Galley Tour (that's the kitchen!) On one cruise alone, the culinary team serves up 25,545 pounds of beef, 22,652 pounds of fish, 2,250 pounds of lobster, 15,200 eggs, 12,000 pounds of sugar and 18,400 bottles of wine! The multi-level wine tower in the main dining room holds approximately 35,000 bottles of wine.

No matter what kind of food you are craving, you are likely to find it on board. Breakfast is a buffet with dozens of food stations including fresh omelette stations where chefs make your eggs to order. There are various lunch choices from the buffet to the poolside BBQ. There are two seatings for dinner in the dining room featuring white linen table service and extraordinary service. The three course dinner service offers plenty of choices with entrees which changed daily. But wait, there's more. Specialty restaurants on board include *Murano*, offering contemporary French cuisine, *Tuscan Grille*, *Osine* (Uniquely Unordinary) and *Lawn Club Grill*. There's also



a sushi restaurant and *The Porch* which offers seafood and Mediterranean-inspired cuisine. Our memorable lunch in the *Tuscan Grille* featured calamari and other fresh seafood, freshly made bruschetta, charcuterie and deliciously prepared fresh fish.

Live shows in the theatre are first rate, ranging from hilarious comedians to Broadway-style cabarets.

Hotel Director Niyazi Korkmaz and all of the Celebrity team go out of their way to ensure each guest has a memorable experience, including providing plenty of opportunities for a photo with Captain Dimitrios Kafetzis or Captain Panagiotis Skylogiannis and the First Officers. If you want to be treated like a celebrity—and who doesn't—climb aboard a Celebrity Cruise Ship and set sail for paradise. For more information visit [www.celebritycruises.com](http://www.celebritycruises.com) 