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A STAR IS BORN

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YOUR 8-PAGE GUIDE TO VIKING OCEAN CRUISES



Viking takes to the high seas

The river cruise line has recreated its award-winning formula for ocean voyages, and the results are dazzling, says **Pat Richardson**

It is not often a cruise line launches a ship based on popular demand. But that's exactly how Viking came to build its first ocean-going vessel, taking its industry-leading expertise in river cruising to the high seas based on feedback from guests. The result is the masterful Viking Star, her sleek exterior profile, airy, spacious interior, clean lines and invitingly intimate scale creating a new level of excellence at sea.

Anyone who has enjoyed river cruising Viking-style will relish the cruise line's refreshingly intimate approach to ocean journeys. At 48,000 tons, Viking Star carries just 930 guests; all the better for gaining access to

hard-to-reach ports, avoiding endless waits to disembark, and maintaining Viking's generous staff-to-guest ratio to ensure the best service.

All that is no coincidence. Designing and building the ship in response to customer feedback gave Viking the opportunity to recreate its sumptuous river experience on a grand scale. It has splashed out on industry firsts – such as the first glass-walled infinity pool at sea – and invested in creating outstanding itineraries packed with fascinating included excursions and once-in-a-lifetime optional experiences such as a private visit to Istanbul's Basilica Cistern by night and cooking with a Countess at her home in Venice.

Guests requesting an ocean ship had already experienced and enjoyed cruising on one or more of the company's 60-plus river vessels, so were looking for the same revolutionary approach to design and guest experience, the same service excellence, comfort and convenience, and the same relaxed, informal vibe they've learned to expect on board Viking vessels. All this needed to be combined with expertly curated itineraries, showcasing highlights of Europe and the Mediterranean, the Baltic, Scandinavia, the Caribbean and North America.

Great-value inclusions are also as much a part of the ocean-going model as Viking's river cruises. On board, there's no extra charge

for dining in any of the ship's alternative restaurants and, in whichever one you eat, wine, beer and soft drinks served with lunch and dinner are included. Room service is complimentary and available 24 hours a day. Wi-Fi is free throughout the ship; the self-service guest laundries are free; so too is use of the spa's hydrotherapy pool, sauna and gym. And there's an included guided tour in almost every port of call (plus a great range of optional excursions).

Revolutionary it may be but still, this elegant ship comes gift-wrapped in "make-yourself-at-home" charm. The styling script marries classic with contemporary, then generously

seasons that harmonious union with Scandinavian flair. The ambience is grown-up, pared-down, calm – and very inviting.

Colours throughout are pale or mid-toned, with blues predominating against a background of beige and cream. Shots of bright colour here and there come in small doses – such as cushions and chair-back stitching – and are all the more effective for that. With woven textiles and light-toned woods including pine, white ash, birch and juniper, Viking Star's look is anchored in nature, in Nordic scenery, in Viking culture – a uniquely appealing alchemy.

Public areas include the Atrium, the Living Room (spread over

Beauty on the Grand Canal
Viking Star sails into Venice

three decks surrounding it), the split-level Explorers' Lounge, and the Wintergarden and are filled with light which pours in through double-height windows, skylights and glass ceilings. All have a pleasing space-to-spare feel, yet each has an inviting intimacy.

Seating areas are designed for groups of two, four, or perhaps a few more, to share and relax in. Comfortable chairs and sofas come with cosy cushions, rugs or reindeer pelts and you'll find books and newspapers close at hand.

Continued overleaf

INSIDE | THE FIRST SNOW GROTTO AT SEA, SCANDI STYLE ON BOARD, DINING OUT AND DAY-TO-NIGHT CRUISE FASHION

IS THIS THE WORLD'S MOST BEAUTIFUL CRUISE SHIP?

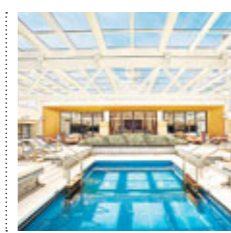


A STAR IS BORN VIKING TAKES TO THE HIGH SEAS

WHAT I LOVED MOST ABOUT VIKING STAR

▶ The wraparound Promenade Deck – every ship should have one, not all do.
▶ The way check-in was carried out between airport and ship, so I boarded with the key to my stateroom

in my hand and found my luggage already there.
▶ The sleekly sculpted trees in the Wintergarden, with branches forming a beautiful canopy.
▶ The heated floor in



my bathroom – a touch of absolute bliss.
▶ The workout machines outdoors on the topmost deck; keep-fit is more fun in the fresh air with sea views.
▶ The fresh open sandwiches served at

Viking Bar – perfect for a lighter lunch.
▶ The glass-walled infinity pool at the ship's stern; nothing feels more luxurious than soaking up the view while enjoying a relaxing dip.

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Explore the innovative spa, complete with snow grotto, that is helping guests relax

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Meet the team

The captain, hotel manager, cruise director, itinerary planner and ship's doctor share their Viking Star stories

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There's also an impressive array of Scandinavian art and photography on the walls; but Viking Star has other, more subtly displayed delights which don't, for the most part, shout "Look at me!" but do richly reward the eye that lights upon them. You'll find scenes from the Bayeux Tapestry in the stairwells; intriguing artefacts from nature, nautical history and Viking culture in the Explorers' Lounge, and a garden inspired by a mountain plateau in the Atrium.

The unfussy Scandinavian style, with its clean lines, soft-toned colours, airy lightness and restful calm extends to guests' spacious personal havens: the staterooms and suites, all of which come with not just a view, but also a private veranda. There is plenty of storage space, too, as well as a comfy seating area and complimentary movies-on-demand, if you fancy a night in.

As for nights out, first choose your bar. The Viking Bar edging the Atrium puts you in pole position for listening to the pianist at the Steinway Grand. The Explorers' Bar, in the Explorers' Lounge is perfect for forward observation. Later, catch a show or maybe an opera in the theatre or slip into Torshavn nightclub for some entertainment with your nightcap.

What else is there to do on board? Plenty. You can swim. The main pool has a retractable glass roof ensuring swimmers can enjoy the water no matter the weather. And of course, the glass-walled infinity pool is as showstopping as a cruising first



should be, cantilevered as it is off the stern, with views over the ship's wake. An inviting hot tub sits just inches away, and sun loungers enable guests to make the most of the sunshine.

You can work out. There's a fitness centre by The Spa, and there is exercise equipment on the Sports Deck – plus putting green, bowling green and shuffleboard.

You can relax. The stylish spa features a hydrotherapy pool, steam room, sauna and, for those hardy enough to offset their sauna in true Scandinavian fashion, a snow grotto. Or, opt for a treatment from the Salon's comprehensive menu.

You can learn. Pick up a book in the Explorers' Lounge and read about the world you're there to experience. Or attend an itinerary-related talk by an expert, and find



Ship to shore
Clockwise from main picture, stylish seating on deck; Puerto Rico beach; kayaking in a Norwegian fjord; elegant food on board; Viking Star's main pool

out more about your ports of call.

And you can eat. Indoors or alfresco is the easy choice. Which cuisine at which venue is more difficult – local specialities from wherever you're visiting in The Restaurant, buffet-style dining in The World Café, Manfredi's Italian or Mamsen's Scandinavian deli? Relaxed dining is a feature of The Pool Grill, set taster menus and wine pairings delight at The Chef's Table and afternoon tea is served in The Wintergarden.

The Kitchen Table is the only experience that costs extra as it involves a trip ashore with the chef to shop for ingredients and the chance to prepare them before enjoying a multi-course dinner.

Wine, beer and soft drinks at lunch and dinner are included, there's no formal dress code and seating is open – although

reservations are required for the alternative restaurants.

Travelling in sophisticated comfort is all part of the Viking experience. So too is the privilege of exploring spectacular destinations. With Viking Star, the



cruise line has replicated its phenomenal attention to detail when planning voyages to offer a unique perspective.

New itineraries include the 11-day West Indies Explorer, starting and ending in Puerto Rico and taking in nine more sultry islands; In the Wake of the Vikings, is a 15-day cruise from Bergen in Norway to Montreal in Canada via the Shetland and Faroe islands, Iceland and Greenland; and the 13-day Eastern Seaboard Explorer takes guests from Montreal to New York, visiting a host of exciting Canadian and US ports of call.

Empires of the Mediterranean is a 10-day tour whisking guests from Venice to Istanbul via Croatia, Montenegro and Greece. Further voyages focus on the romance of the southern Mediterranean and island-

hopping, while Nordic Explorer is an epic 36-day trip from Istanbul to Bergen. For an even more thorough tour of Europe, Russia and Scandinavia, the 50-day Viking Empire takes in 19 countries. Or make the most of the summer months on the Into the Midnight Sun 15-day cruise along the Norwegian coast, then to Scotland's Shetland and Orkney Islands and down to London.

Remember that with every Viking cruise, a guided tour is included in the price at almost every port of call, with optional extras from sailing a luxury yacht on the French Riviera to kayaking a tranquil fjord in Norway.

With all the style and exclusivity of a river cruise combined with truly adventurous itineraries, it's easy to see why Viking Star is making waves.

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VIKING HOMELANDS

15 DAYS FROM £3,790PP

£500PP
EARLY
BOOKING
DISCOUNT

FREE WI-FI*

FREE USE
OF SPA

Stockholm, Sweden

ALL THIS IS INCLUDED:

- ✓ 15-day cruise: Stockholm to Bergen
- ✓ Stateroom or suite with a private veranda
- ✓ All on board meals in a choice of 11 dining venues, including many alfresco options
- ✓ Quality house wine, beer and soft drinks with lunch and dinner on board
- ✓ On board entertainment and use of spa
- ✓ Free tea and coffee, 24/7
- ✓ Free excursion in almost every port
- ✓ Free Wi-Fi on board*
- ✓ Pre-paid on board gratuities
- ✓ Return scheduled flights from UK

YOUR JOURNEY:

- Days 1-2** Stockholm, Sweden
Day 3 Helsinki, Finland
Days 4-5 St. Petersburg, Russia
Day 6 Tallinn, Estonia
Day 7 Cruise the Baltic Sea
Day 8 Gdańsk (Gdynia), Poland
Day 9 Berlin (Warnemünde), Germany
Day 10 Copenhagen, Denmark
Day 11 Ålborg, Denmark
Day 12 Stavanger, Norway
Day 13 Eidfjord, Norway
Days 14-15 Bergen, Norway

2017 departure dates

Prices per person, based on double occupancy

| | | VERANDA | DELUXE VERANDA | PENTHOUSE VERANDA | PENTHOUSE JUNIOR SUITE | EXPLORER SUITE |
|--|--|-------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| April 30 | 2017 price from with £500pp saving from | SOLD OUT | £4,290 £3,790 | £5,290 £4,790 | £6,190 £5,690 | £7,990 £7,490 |
| May 6 | 2017 price from with £500pp saving from | SOLD OUT | £4,490 £3,990 | £5,490 £4,990 | £6,390 £5,890 | £8,190 £7,690 |
| May 14, 20 | 2017 price from with £500pp saving from | SOLD OUT | £4,690 £4,190 | £5,690 £5,190 | £6,590 £6,090 | £8,390 £7,890 |
| May 28 | 2017 price from with £500pp saving from | SOLD OUT | £4,890 £4,390 | £5,890 £5,390 | £6,790 £6,290 | £8,590 £8,090 |
| June 3, 11 July 1, 15, 23, 29 August 6, 12, 20, 26 September 3, 9 | 2017 price from with £500pp saving from | SOLD OUT | £5,090 £4,590 | £6,090 £5,590 | £6,990 £6,490 | £8,790 £8,290 |

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**VIKING
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A STAR IS BORN DESIGN

The ultimate in contemporary Scandi style

Awash with simple clean lines, sleek sophistication and subtle shades, Viking Star epitomises classic Scandinavian interior design at its modern best, says **Sara Emslie**

There's such a tremendous amount of sophisticated simplicity at the heart of modern Scandinavian design that its no wonder we can't seem to get enough of it in our interiors. Wood – in pale and dark tones and whether on the floor or walls – is the perfect backdrop for the clean lines, calm neutrals and natural elements that make up the key ingredients of Scandi style. It's a look that would scream elegance – and loudly so – if it wasn't so politely understated.

So it's no wonder that the designers of Viking Cruises' new Viking Star have taken this on board, quite literally, as the creative inspiration for the ship's interior design. Viking has openly embraced the cultural heritage of its homelands to create a nautical feel that is rich in Nordic history and bang up to date on style, too. Wherever you may wander on board – and there are nine decks on which to do so – there is the feeling of a phenomenal sense of light and space but without a compromise on intimacy. Despite being smaller than the average mega cruise vessel – Viking Star accommodates just 930 guests – the ship has been designed to provide plenty of open-plan areas for ultimate relaxation, enjoyment and mingling with others, as well as cosy areas for individual moments of peace and quiet.

There isn't a better place to experience this than in the Viking Living Room with its connecting atrium spanning decks 1, 2 and 3. With the smart sophistication of a boutique hotel that wouldn't look out of place in *Wallpaper* magazine or any other top interiors glossy, and a restricted palette of coffees and creams with hints of burnt orange and teal blue, plenty of blonde and dark cherry wood tones, the entire space imbues a sense of calm and echoes modern Scandinavian design at its best.

It's a confident space with a wide-open staircase connecting the main lounge and piano area to the atrium with a high-resolution digital screen slideshow "painting" backdrop, as well as a smattering of design classics such as Eames Aluminium chairs in the internet nook and Mario Bellini's leather Cab chairs at the bar. Low level dividing bookcases section off individual seating areas within the open plan as well as showcasing decorative



glassware and exquisite artisan ceramics that give the interior a hugely personal feel.

There are plenty of nautical nuances, too, such as rug designs, ribbed detailing in the ceiling, integrated metal work and wood panelling all inspired by the architectural design of ancient Viking ships, and macramé window dressings reminiscent of traditional Norwegian handicrafts.

There's even an indoor "garden" that defines the Scandinavian love of natural elements: under the staircase is a large-scale contemporary geometric mosaic of multi-coloured lichens – a theme that is picked up and repeated with much smaller dimensions as table decorations throughout the ship with tiny displays of dried twigs, pods, lichen and birch bark that

resemble little foraged collections from the Nordic forests.

The whole of the ship's interior is an enormous visual feast of Scandinavian colours, textures and materials such as birch, ash, juniper woods, Swedish granite, slate, etched and recycled glass, hand-woven natural fibre textiles, arctic and ocean hues, alongside historic, mythological and natural references that link the spaces as a whole while allowing each to maintain an individual sense of place.

A carefully curated collection of artwork by celebrated artists in all mediums – photograph, sketches, paintings, lithographs and sculpture – is on display throughout the ship and acts as a reference to the Vikings who as travellers were collectors too, as well as being a nod to the range of

cultural ports of call on each voyage. It's a diverse collection that includes lithographs by Norwegian artist Edvard Munch, ceramic relief artworks by British and Brazilian contemporary artists, illustrations bearing scenes from the Bayeux Tapestry, and a range of exquisite black-and-white photographs depicting the serenity of the Nordic landscape as well as some of the shores and cities on the Viking routes.

Inspired by the early adventurers and travellers of the past, the Explorers' Lounge and adjoining atrium at the bow of the ship, however, is the area that fully embraces the Viking legacy of travel and exploration and is a spectacular observatory-like space in which to sit and watch the world outside pass by during the day – and at night also when a light

panelled band consisting of illuminated constellations transforms the space. Full glass windows provide a panoramic lookout as the ship sails forth and a host of explorers' and maritime paraphernalia such as compasses, maps, and models of ships, including the famous Oseberg "karv" ship dating from AD820, considered one of the finest finds of the Viking age, set the scene.

There's also a library corner where shelving is filled with Nordic artefacts that make reference to the Viking history and a plethora of books on global exploration, geography and natural history to whet the appetite for further adventure.

But no ocean cruise ship would be complete without a pool. Viking Star has two pool areas, each with accompanying hot tubs and both as enticing as each other. A third hydrotherapy pool may be enjoyed in The Spa with adjoining sauna and snow grotto for the complete nature-inspired Nordic bathing ritual (see page 7).

The main pool is part of the expansive Wintergarden with its retractable roof, intricate pale wood lattice-work tree structure, wrought-iron panels and sculptures depicting Huginn and Muninn – the ravens that fly all over the world delivering information to Odin, the Nordic god in local mythology. Here, the contemporary resort-style loungers and outdoor seating, interspersed with designer Frank Gehry Cross Check chairs, can be enjoyed in any weather and provides the perfect spot for an indulgent afternoon tea.

And then there is the quite spectacular cantilevered infinity pool at the stern of the ship by the sleekly styled all glass and stainless steel Aquavit bar. This is complemented by an equally impressive modernist colour block statement wall in polar white and punchy blue and grey, accompanied by similar geometric detailing in tiles and textiles in the adjoining relaxed poolside dining area.

It's safe to say that no matter where you are on board, from your stateroom (see panel, right) to the lounging areas or in one of the many restaurants – choose from smart and classic fine dining to informal indoor or alfresco options – you will be immersed in a deluxe interior experience at every level.

Without a doubt and in true Viking shipbuilding fashion, Viking Cruises has created a superior vessel that is clearly capable of embracing life on the ocean wave. Unlike those longboats built by the ancient Norsemen, though, this is one where travellers on board can sit back, relax and enjoy the utmost in luxury, comfort and sophisticated Scandinavian interior style while watching the world float by.

STATEROOM REVIEW

DESIGN

All 465 staterooms are furnished with modern Scandinavian décor, including comfortable lounge seating, a desk area, a large king-size bed and private veranda.

Price categories range from the Veranda Stateroom and the 270 sq ft Deluxe Veranda Stateroom to the 338 sq ft Penthouse Veranda Stateroom, 405 sq ft Penthouse Junior Suite and 757 sq ft Explorer Suite, all with varying amenities.

Or for the ultimate treat, opt for the deluxe Owners' Suite at a staggering 1,448 sq ft with large living room, dining nook with food pantry area, and private sauna offering views over the ocean.



MOD CONS

Every stateroom has free Wi-Fi, large flat-screen TV with interactive programmes and films on demand, direct-dial satellite phone service, security safe and hairdryer.

Amenities, depending on stateroom category, range from complimentary mini bar and champagne, free shoe shining and laundry services, priority main restaurant booking and 11am stateroom access on day of arrival.

BATHROOM

Contemporary design with large wet-room-style walk-in shower, pale wood vanity units, stainless-steel accessories, under-floor heating and fluffy white towels. Luxurious robes, slippers and toiletries are also provided.



SERVICE

Welcome touches include plump goose-down pillows and luxury linens and complimentary 24-hour room service.

Light and space Clockwise from main picture, relax in the beautiful Wintergarden; Penthouse Junior Suite; Veranda Stateroom bathroom

WEST INDIES EXPLORER

11 DAYS FROM £2,490PP

£500PP EARLY BOOKING DISCOUNT

FREE WI-FI*

FREE USE OF SPA

British Virgin Islands

ALL THIS IS INCLUDED:

- ✓ 11-day cruise: San Juan roundtrip
- ✓ Stateroom or suite with a private veranda
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- ✓ Free tea and coffee, 24/7
- ✓ Free excursion in almost every port
- ✓ Free Wi-Fi on board*
- ✓ Pre-paid on board gratuities
- ✓ Return scheduled flights from the UK

YOUR JOURNEY:

- Day 1** San Juan, Puerto Rico
- Day 2** San Juan, Puerto Rico
- Day 3** Road Town, Tortola, British Virgin Islands
- Day 4** St. John's, Antigua
- Day 5** Castries, St. Lucia
- Day 6** Bridgetown, Barbados
- Day 7** Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe
- Day 8** Basseterre, St. Kitts
- Day 9** Philipsburg, St. Maarten
- Day 10** Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands
- Day 11** San Juan, Puerto Rico

2016 & 2017 departure dates

Prices per person, based on double occupancy

| | VERANDA | DELUXE VERANDA | PENTHOUSE VERANDA | PENTHOUSE JUNIOR SUITE | EXPLORER SUITE |
|--------------------|---------|----------------|-------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| October 28 | | | | | |
| November 7, 17, 27 | £2,990 | £3,440 | £4,140 | £4,790 | £6,190 |
| December 7 | £2,490 | £2,940 | £3,640 | £4,290 | £5,690 |
| January 6, 16, 26 | | | | | |
| February 5, 15 | £2,990 | £3,440 | £4,140 | £4,790 | £6,190 |
| | £2,490 | £2,940 | £3,640 | £4,290 | £5,690 |

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A STAR IS BORN ON-BOARD DINING

VINE TIMES

Having opened the extensive wine cellar on board Viking Star at its launch in April 2015, the ship's sommelier, Lorena Merlini, is passionate about sharing its wonders. She has put together a unique offering of extraordinary depth and diversity, starting with excellent house

wines from Italy, France, Spain, Greece and Turkey. "I change the inclusive wines daily to let guests savour more experiences,"



she says. "With an average of 450 bottles a day, we load wine at every port, and I pick local indigenous grapes to give every location an

identity." On board, you can enjoy a wine tasting with cheese pairings and in-depth questions and answers. Wine-lovers also flock

to Manfredi's, the reservation-only Italian restaurant, with its treasure trove of more than 125 Old and New World wines. Special finds include

Experience the finest dining at sea

With 11 sumptuous eateries on board Viking Star, the toughest decision of your cruise is where to dine each evening, says **Sarah Edworthy**

No matter how many exotic ports you visit, the first question on your return home brimming with colourful stories is always: "What was the food like?" Cruise aficionados understand that on-board dining inspired by the places you visit can enhance your travel adventures. On a 10-day Empires of the Mediterranean itinerary – a stunning Adriatic, Ionian and Aegean odyssey which explores the rich heritages of Pula, Dubrovnik, Kotor, Santorini, Athens, Ephesus and Istanbul – the oohs and aahs started minutes after being welcomed on board in Venice with a glass of champagne.

Moored in the Giudecca Canal, with views across a skyline studded with domes and bell towers, Viking Star's World Café buffet on Deck 7 offered indoor and *alfresco* seating, friendly wine waiters and an alluring regional-inspired lunch menu. I had opted for a crisp Caesar salad and grilled tiger prawns, and was greedily eyeing up the homemade *linguini alla vongole* when a fellow guest conspiratorially leant across from her table.

"You must try the Bourbon and raisin gelato!" she urged. "They make it fresh on board. I would never have picked this flavour but everyone's recommending it. It's truly delicious. I'm Emmy Lou, by the way. Nice to meet you."

And there, in a dollop of ice cream – which I did go and try, served at a counter which also boasted exotic fruit kebabs, a chocolate fountain and classic Italian puddings – is the essence of culinary life on board. Guests are notably curious, appreciative, with a passion to share their enthusiasms while chefs and their kitchen brigades are intent on conjuring top quality authentic local specialities with surprise touches.

Sampling different local food specialities along these beautiful coastlines gives piquant insight into local culture as well as pleasure. But breakfast, I assumed, would surely be pretty routine each day? Not so. You can plot an itinerary-within-your-cruise-itinerary simply in making different breakfast ports of call each morning. You can opt for indoors one day, a deck table the next, waiter service or buffet, formal or casual, the full works grilled to order or heart-healthy fruit and cereal. You can eat Nordic,

“On a 12-day voyage, chefs prepare 800 live lobsters, 1,000 oysters and 880lbs of Norwegian salmon



continental or classic American. You can eat on your own, on a communal table or order room service.

Early risers start the day on fur-draped sofas in the top-deck Explorers' Lounge with incredible harbourside views and traditional Scandinavian sweet rolls and cloudberry jam, salmon gravadlax and waffles from Mamsen's Deli. You can also opt for coffee and pastries in the cosy Viking Living Room on Deck 1. The World Café buffet, which wraps around the aft of the ship on Deck 7, specialises in American staples such as apple-smoked crispy bacon, Texan French bread, made-to-order omelettes, grits and waffles with orange butter and maple syrup as well as chilled fruit, bircher muesli and patisseries galore. Between 8 and 9.30am, you can enjoy the same menu in The Restaurant attended by waiters.

The purpose of breakfast, of course, is to fuel the day's excursions ashore. These are doubly rewarding when they combine a foodie element. In Pula, a morning spent olive oil tasting courtesy of the

charismatic Chiavalon brothers at their organic farm brings to life the history of its production on the sun-baked Istrian peninsula. With the green, grassy smell of their exemplary cold pressed extra virgin olive oil in your nose and its bitter spicy taste in your mouth, you then visit the underground area of the majestic Roman amphitheatre in Pula – which boasts the world's largest collection of ancient amphorae used for oil storage – and feel a visceral connection to life in the first century AD.

That respect for seasonal produce is compounded when your visit coincides with the annual sardine harvest, and you watch fisherman on the pier transfer their catches from trawler to ice boxes – the modern equivalent of amphorae.

Ashore in Dubrovnik a day later, I feasted my eyes on the Old Town architecture and fabulous Renaissance paintings inside the Dominican Monastery as part of the inclusive guided walking tour and opted to drive along the coastline into the Konavle Valley for lunch at

Konavoski Dvori mill restaurant, said to be the second best eatery in Croatia. Staff dressed in traditional costume serve simple but tasty rural fare – lentil soup, salad, roast meat and potatoes – in tables set under lush green tree cover on the banks of the Ljuta River.

Alternatively, the Dalmatian Coast Wine & Food Tasting excursion took a group of fellow guests on a gastro-adventure via a local vineyard, an olive oil mill and a boat ride out to the famous oyster and mussel beds. Back on board, we continued the theme by choosing garlicky, steamed Dubrovnik mussels in a saffron-infused sauce for dinner.

On all Viking ocean cruises, the quality of seafood earns plenty of positive feedback. The chefs receive fresh fish every other day in port. On a 12-day voyage, they will prepare 800 live lobsters, 1,000 oysters, 880lbs of Norwegian salmon, 660lbs each of sea bass and dorado, 530 pints of mussels and 265lbs of clams. The fresh seafood buffet offered on the Aquavit Terrace is an impressive display of king crab

Mouth-watering
A chef plates up in the Viking Star kitchens

legs, crab claw and tiger shrimps. Sushi – which is consumed at the rate of 800 pieces a night – is beautifully displayed in the World Café. I counted up to six different colourful ingredients apiece in the various sushi rolls. The chefs in the reservation-only restaurants laughingly acknowledge guests often tuck into the sushi upstairs before coming down to their booked sitting or dash back upstairs to round off their à la carte dinner with a few more sushi rolls. They are that good.

With 11 different dining venues throughout the ship, you can try out alternative restaurants without any extra charge; however, reservations are required with priority given depending on stateroom grade. Whether you opt for a lunchtime snack at Mamsen's Deli, a Viking Burger and fries at the Pool Grill or Afternoon Tea in the serenely beautiful poolside Wintergarden.

For evening glamour in an intimate setting, you need to reserve a table at Manfredi's, the Tuscan restaurant. Cosy and intimate with its monochrome décor, black-and-

EMPIRES OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

10 DAYS FROM £2,665PP

£500PP EARLY BOOKING DISCOUNT

FREE WI-FI*

FREE USE OF SPA

Dubrovnik, Croatia

ALL THIS IS INCLUDED:

- ✓ 10-day cruise: Venice to Istanbul
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- ✓ Pre-paid on board gratuities
- ✓ Return scheduled flights from UK

YOUR JOURNEY:

- Day 1** Venice, Italy
- Day 2** Pula, Croatia
- Day 3** Dubrovnik, Croatia
- Day 4** Kotor, Montenegro
- Day 5** Cruise the Ionian Sea
- Day 6** Santorini (Thira), Greece
- Day 7** Athens (Piraeus), Greece
- Day 8** Ephesus (Kuşadası), Turkey
- Day 9** Istanbul, Turkey
- Day 10** Istanbul, Turkey

2016 & 2017 departure dates

Prices per person, based on double occupancy

| | | VERANDA | DELUXE VERANDA | PENTHOUSE VERANDA | PENTHOUSE JUNIOR SUITE | EXPLORER SUITE |
|------------------|--|----------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| October 28 | 2016 price from with £500pp saving from | SOLD OUT | £3,665 £3,165 | £4,415 £3,915 | £5,065 £4,565 | £6,440 £5,940 |
| December 4 | 2016 price from with £500pp saving from | SOLD OUT | £3,165 £2,665 | £3,915 £3,415 | £4,565 £4,065 | £5,940 £5,440 |
| March 17 | 2017 price from with £500pp saving from | SOLD OUT | £3,165 £2,665 | £3,915 £3,415 | £4,565 £4,065 | £5,940 £5,440 |
| March 23, 25, 26 | 2017 price from with £500pp saving from | SOLD OUT | £3,365 £2,865 | £4,115 £3,615 | £4,765 £4,265 | £6,140 £5,640 |
| April 1 | 2017 price from with £500pp saving from | SOLD OUT | £3,665 £3,165 | £4,415 £3,915 | £5,065 £4,565 | £6,440 £5,940 |

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ABTA No: V924X



VIKING CRUISES
Exploring the World in Comfort®

an exquisite Orto di Venezia from a small production on Sant'Erasmo Island (£73), and a fruity Dolcetto di Diano d'Alba (\$49) from Piedmont.

And the Chef's Table – with its five-course menu of witty pairings – offers further opportunity to explore oenophile pleasures.

white retro photographs and chandeliers, it is also a haven for wine lovers with its list of more than 125 hand-selected Old and New World wines. "You find yourself so well treated you want to treat yourself," says head sommelier Lorena Merlini, who also takes pride in her six grappa, three limoncello and other Italian liqueurs for an end of evening signature taste.

It is difficult to settle on your choices from the Manfredi's menu. All the dishes appeal. Should I opt for old favourites, such as a caprese salad or fried calamari with crispy parsley and balsamic aioli, or try the asparagus & polenta with poached eggs, *parmigiano reggiano* and truffle? The *tortelli al tartufo e ricotta* with steamed asparagus or the capellini with zucchini-wrapped tiger shrimp and lemon sauce?

Just when I'd settled on the Italian veal shank dish *osso buco alla Milanese* as a main course, plates of *saltimbocca*, *bistecca alla Fiorentina* and grilled fish of the day wafted past towards another table causing serious plate envy. My choices were matched with wines that beautifully complimented the food: a crisp, light sauvignon with semillon blanc that rounded off the creaminess of the succulent shrimp, and a well balanced rompicollo sangiovese that perfectly augmented the best *osso buco* I've ever tasted. The aroma of the *gremolata* alone (fresh rosemary, thyme and lemon zest), sprinkled on top of the braised veal and deep saffron risotto, is not something I ever imagined could be conjured up on a ship that carries 930 guests.

The Chef's Table is another winning dining experience with its five-course menu of wine and food pairings. The theme was sweet & salty for my dinner, and we savoured an amuse bouche of tomato and watermelon gazpacho with feta cheese that came with a taste of muscadet. It was followed by grilled scallop, beets and passion fruit with dry rosé, an excellent palate-cleansing prosciutto and melon flavoured granita in preparation for a veal tenderloin with a smooth provencal red. The final flourish was a strawberry and basil concoction with black Hawaiian lava salt.

Torshavn, a lounge bar which hosts live music from 9pm, is a great place to sign off the day. Bartenders Siady and Panji mix cocktails while amusing guests with their banter. The bar is lined with Viking Star's vintage armagnacs. In keeping with the philosophy of linking taste with experience, Viking Cruises founder and chairman Torstein Hagen has personally tasted and selected a range of vintages dating from 1935 to 1965. Each bottle is labelled 17/7/14 – the date of bottling – and comes with a capsule story of world events from that year. The 1935, for example (\$220 for a 4cl shot) – marks the year Penguin introduced its first paperback.

From the Aquavit Terrace, arranged around the infinity pool, to your stateroom veranda, Viking Star offers more alfresco dining than any other ocean vessel of a similar size. Relax with a drink in the Wintergarden or enjoy an aperitif listening to the resident guitarist on the Aquavit Terrace. There is always a new experience to savour.

CRUISE STYLE THAT TAKES YOU FROM DAY TO NIGHT

EVERYTHING'S BLACK & WHITE

The key to holiday packing is to limit your colour palette. These three pieces from Hobbs look great together and are easy to mix with other items. The striped cotton-blend skirt would look good with a simple white shirt for daytime, while the applique mesh jacket could be stunning over a black dress.

Belize jacket, £199; Belize ivory jersey top, £79; Antonella skirt, £129. hobbs.co.uk



BAGS OF STYLE

Leave your smart leather bags at home and pack this covetable Ted Baker tote for poolside, beach or on-shore shopping expeditions. It's as practical as it's pretty: the dark background Sophia floral design won't show marks, and it's finished in water-resistant neoprene. Height 29cm, width 45cm.

£99, tedbaker.com

DAY TO NIGHT

This floaty, lacey top from Alice Temperley's Somerset range for John Lewis works as well for evening cocktails as it does paired with white cropped trousers for a Mediterranean harbourside lunch.

From the new spring 2016 collection, the flattering three-quarter-length sleeves and feminine scalloped edging make this a must-buy.

£99, johnlewis.com



KEEP IT SIMPLE

A stylish straw hat with black ribbon trim will go with everything. This Rosie Contrast Trim is all you'll need from beach to bazaar.

£20, oliverbonas.com



VINTAGE SHADES

Based on original designs from the 1940s, 50s and 60s, every pair of glasses in Black Eyewear's collection is named in honour of a jazz singer or musician. These Anita sunglasses in pastel red are named after American singer Anita O'Day (1919-2006), also known as the "Jezebel of Jazz". Wear them if you dare.

£167, blackeyewear.com



ADD SPARKLE

An art deco inspired collar in brass with beaded detail, this necklace manages to look good with everything, from a plain T-shirt to a silky evening dress. Handmade in India for ethical fashion firm People Tree, which works within Fair Trade standards.

£38, peopletree.co.uk

A STAR IS BORN CRUISE STYLE



POOLSIDE GLAMOUR

One item in your suitcase worth splashing out on is a swimsuit. New York designer Norma Kamali, a celebrity favourite, has created designs reminiscent of the Marilyn Monroe era. The figure-flattering Bill Mio halterneck swimsuit, in mint, has a lycra base with a second layer of ruched polyester jersey.

£335, harveynichols.com



SHIP TO SHORE

A pair of wide-leg trousers are a holiday wardrobe essential: try these navy "Harriet" geometric tile print ones from Monsoon, with contrasting border at the hems. Incredibly comfortable, they come in a wide range of sizes and have an elasticated insert at the back of the waistband for a flexible fit.

£45, monsoon.co.uk

EASTERN SEABOARD EXPLORER

13 DAYS FROM £5,095PP

£500PP EARLY BOOKING DISCOUNT

FREE WI-FI*

FREE USE OF SPA



Statue of Liberty, New York City

ALL THIS IS INCLUDED:

- ✓ 13-day cruise: Montreal to New York City
- ✓ Stateroom or suite with a private veranda
- ✓ All on board meals in a choice of 11 dining venues, including many alfresco options
- ✓ Quality house wine, beer and soft drinks with lunch and dinner on board
- ✓ On board entertainment and use of spa
- ✓ Free tea and coffee, 24/7
- ✓ Free excursion in almost every port
- ✓ Free Wi-Fi on board*
- ✓ Pre-paid on board gratuities
- ✓ Return scheduled flights from the UK

YOUR JOURNEY:

- Days 1-2** Montreal, Canada
- Day 3** Quebec City, Canada
- Day 4** Saguenay, Canada
- Day 5** Cruise the St. Lawrence River
- Day 6** Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada
- Day 7** Cruise the Gulf of St. Lawrence
- Day 8** Halifax, Canada
- Day 9** Cruise the Eastern Seaboard
- Days 10-11** Boston, USA
- Days 12-13** New York City, USA

2016 departure dates

Prices per person, based on double occupancy

| | VERANDA | DELUXE VERANDA | PENTHOUSE VERANDA | PENTHOUSE JUNIOR SUITE | EXPLORER SUITE |
|-----------|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| October 2 | 2016 price from £5,595 with £500pp saving from £5,095 | £5,895 £5,395 | £6,595 £6,095 | £7,295 £6,795 | £8,795 £8,295 |

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A STAR IS BORN DESTINATIONS



EMPIRES OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

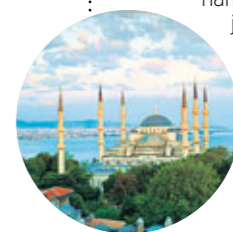
With everything from an evening concert at Our Lady of the Rocks in Montenegro to a trip in a light aircraft over Ephesus, it's no wonder Viking Cruises' 10-day Empires of the Mediterranean voyage from Venice to Istanbul or vice-versa is a favourite.

This is an extraordinary journey through ancient civilisations that also visits some of the most beautiful ports in the Mediterranean.

In Pula, Croatia, for instance, an included walking tour takes in the Roman amphitheatre, the Temple of Augustus and the triumphal Arch of Sergii. From Kuşadası, an included tour visits Ephesus, once the fourth largest city in the Roman Empire.

It's the turn of the ancient Greeks on an included tour of Athens that passes the Acropolis and Temple of Zeus (choose the optional excursion of ancient and modern sights to go inside the Acropolis). In Santorini, one of the most beautiful ports in the Greek Isles, an optional tour visits the former Minoan city of Akrotiri that was destroyed by a volcano eruption.

But you don't have to be a history buff to love this cruise. The Akrotiri tour also visits the stunningly beautiful blue-and-white village of Oia, and includes a Greek meze lunch and wine tasting. In Dubrovnik, you can join an optional excursion to nearby villages to taste olive oil, cheese, ham and wine or join a



local family for lunch after a city tour.

In Kotor, a delightful walled city reached by a narrow ria, an

included walking tour shows off the city's narrow medieval streets and pretty piazzas. Come nightfall, the concert at Our Lady of the Rocks, a church built on a man-made island in the ria promises to be a memorable evening out.

The final port of call is Istanbul, where Viking's included tour combines a visit to Rüstem Pasha Mosque with a cruise on the Bosphorus. Adventurous souls can book an evening visit to a traditional Turkish hammam or a trip down into the cisterns beneath the city. It is a grand finale to a wonderful cruise, visiting Europe's magnificent imperial gems.

A whole new way to discover the world

With more time in port and an included tour for every destination, you'll be able to experience it all on your cruise, says **Lee Beaumann**

Take one of the world's most beautiful cruise ships, combine her with voyages to inspiring destinations in the Mediterranean, northern Europe and, new for 2016, the Caribbean and North America, and you have a winning recipe.

The ship is Viking Star, the first vessel launched by Viking Cruises, and the places she visits include Istanbul, Dubrovnik, Barcelona, Venice, Athens, Stockholm, St Petersburg, the Greek Islands of Rhodes, Corfu and Santorini, and many more wonderful destinations.

She holds 930 guests – fewer than most ships her size so she feels very spacious – and is decked out in chic Scandinavian-style, a look that will be replicated on sister ship Viking Sea, which

enters service in spring 2016, and Viking Sky, launching in 2017.

But there is one extra ingredient that has made Viking Cruises a sell-out success since launching Viking Star last spring. Quite simply, it has revolutionised the way we cruise.

Instead of giving guests a few hours ashore, Viking Cruises' destination-rich itineraries include late or overnight stays in port so you can enjoy more time in the amazing places visited. Not only that but the company also includes one free tour in each port to act as an introduction to the highlights. Naturally there are also optional excursions for those who want something different.

On board, so much is included in the price, from the dining and Wi-Fi to wine, beer or soft drinks with meals, that you can almost afford to leave your wallet at home. Not that you'll want to, because the long time in port means you can enjoy local specialities in the restaurants as well as feasting your eyes on sights such as the Acropolis in Athens and Colosseum in Rome. Both are among highlights of a

fabulous new 15-day Ancient Empires and Holy Lands voyage from Rome to Istanbul on board Viking Sea or Viking Sky that will take you on a journey through ancient Greece and Turkey and includes three days in Israel. That's time enough to visit the former Crusader city of Acre, now a Unesco World Heritage Site, tour Jerusalem, a city holy to three religions, or take a dip in the Dead Sea. In Kuşadası, Turkey, an

Sensational sights
Clockwise from main picture, Santorini; Istanbul's Blue Mosque; St Petersburg



included excursion visits the Roman city of Ephesus.

The itinerary also includes three sea days, providing a chance to relax between the sightseeing. Not that you'll sit still for long. On my days at sea, I teamed up for the daily quiz, joined a wine-tasting class, picked up cooking tips in the Kitchen Table cookery school and relaxed on the upper level of the Explorers' Lounge. It's a lovely room with books, comfy chairs and big open views; my favourite spot in the early evening to watch the sun slowly fading.

Viking Cruises has plenty of other exciting itineraries, including an eight-day Romantic Mediterranean voyage from Barcelona to Rome in winter and a 10-day Empires of the Mediterranean cruise (see separate story).

And new for 2016, starting in October, Viking Star makes her Caribbean debut, sailing a series of 11-day voyages that dip into Puerto Rico, Guadeloupe and St Maarten.

Or you could explore Canada and the US on the Eastern Seaboard Explorer, taking you

from francophone Montréal to bustling New York via Québec, Prince Edward Island, Halifax, Boston and Newport.

Back in Europe, the 13-day Mediterranean Odyssey is perfect for city lovers for as well as overnight stays in Barcelona and Venice, there are days out in Pisa, Rome and Monte Carlo. From Naples, an optional tour visits Pompeii, the city destroyed yet preserved in ash in AD79, and you'll even tick off Dubrovnik, the Croatian city known as the Pearl of the Adriatic.

There are more fabulous cities – such as Berlin, Stockholm and Gdansk – as Viking Cruises' ships embark on a series of 15-day cruises through the Baltic and Norwegian fjords.

An alternative 15-day voyage from Bergen to London takes you way up to the North Cape, the most northerly point on the European continent, to discover the Land of the Midnight Sun, combining action-packed days with sunny late-night drinks on the outdoor Aquavit Terrace.

ROMANTIC MEDITERRANEAN

8 DAYS FROM £1,790PP

£500PP EARLY BOOKING DISCOUNT

FREE WI-FI*

FREE USE OF SPA

ALL THIS IS INCLUDED:

- ✓ 8-day cruise: Barcelona to Rome
- ✓ Stateroom or suite with a private veranda
- ✓ All on board meals in a choice of 11 dining venues, including many alfresco options
- ✓ Quality house wine, beer and soft drinks with lunch and dinner on board
- ✓ On board entertainment and use of spa
- ✓ Free tea and coffee, 24/7
- ✓ Free excursion in almost every port
- ✓ Free Wi-Fi on board*
- ✓ Pre-paid on board gratuities
- ✓ Return scheduled flights from UK

YOUR JOURNEY:

- Day 1** Barcelona, Spain
- Day 2** Barcelona, Spain
- Day 3** Toulon, France
- Day 4** Monte Carlo, Monaco
- Day 5** Corsica (Ajaccio), France
- Day 6** Tuscany (Livorno), Italy
- Day 7** Rome (Civitavecchia), Italy
- Day 8** Rome (Civitavecchia), Italy

2017 departure dates

Prices per person, based on double occupancy

| | | VERANDA | DELUXE VERANDA | PENTHOUSE VERANDA | PENTHOUSE JUNIOR SUITE | EXPLORER SUITE |
|---------------------------|--|-----------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| January 8 | 2017 price from with £500pp saving from | SOLD OUT | £2,290 £1,790 | £2,790 £2,290 | £3,240 £2,740 | £4,140 £3,640 |
| January 22 | 2017 price from with £500pp saving from | SOLD OUT | £2,590 £2,090 | £3,090 £2,590 | £3,540 £3,040 | £4,440 £3,940 |
| February 5, 19 March 4 | 2017 price from with £500pp saving from | SOLD OUT | £2,790 £2,290 | £3,290 £2,790 | £3,740 £3,240 | £4,640 £4,140 |

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Tuscany, Italy

A STAR IS BORN
WELL-BEING

An ice place to chill out and enjoy a warm glow

The Spa on board Viking Star boasts the first snow grotto at sea plus saunas and plunge pools for an invigorating thermal experience. By **Jo Foley**

The Vikings were travellers, taking their ironwork, silver crafts and lifestyle with them wherever they trowled and traded. However no one ever thought, come the 21st century, that they would be able to deliver snow encased in a large blue-glass box to sunnier climes. Yet this is exactly what has been achieved on board Viking Star in The Spa.

This snow grotto, for indeed that is what it is, commands pride of place in the thermal suite on Viking's first Nordic spa at sea. Created by Swedish spa company Raison d'Etre, LivNordic (translates as "Nordic life") is a celebration of healthy living in northern latitudes using age-old traditions of hot and cold to bring recuperation and relaxation to body and mind.

First there is heat. What could be more Nordic than a sauna, which relaxes and soothes tense and taut muscles and joints? Then there's a quick burst of cold. This brings blood rushing to the skin's surface along with oxygen, which in turn boosts the circulation as well as revitalising skin and tired muscles.

Up in the frozen north many people have saunas at home and after enjoying some time relaxing in them, think nothing of either rushing out into the snow or plunging into an icy cold pool. Invigoration and a great sense of well-being follows.

But, on board Viking Star, no rushing outside is needed for all is within the luxury of possibly the most elegant spa at sea. The sauna, which heats to approximately 47C, is two or three feet from the snow grotto, which boasts an arctic temperature of -6C.

Spend 10-15 minutes in each. If the idea of stepping into a room of snow in your swimming costume and a pair of flip-flops is a little daunting, you could instead opt for the hard-core alternative and step from the sauna straight under an ice-cold bucket of water. It's the Nordic version of a speciality shower. Each offers the same therapeutic effectiveness.

In fact, the whole hot-and-cold concept is evident throughout the spa. Each changing room - one male and one female - has its own sauna and plunge pool, while the main thermal suite has a hot tub and a heated pool complete with underwater jets to massage and stimulate backs, legs and shoulders. Afterwards, guests can use the sauna followed by a traditional cold shower, the bucket or snow.

The snow, strangely enough, is



A cool experience
Visiting The Spa with its unique snow grotto, below, creates a great sense of well-being



easiest to deal with as it is not such a shock to the system. The burst of cold water involved in the other choices is instant, whereas with the snow it is the atmosphere which is cold and this can take some minutes to be felt. Of course it feels chilly, but not instantly freezing, so the contrast is not so great which is why it leaves so many smiles on so many faces. Guests are surprised by how gentle the initial awareness is.

After a couple of minutes nobody is in any doubt that they are in a

room made of snow - proper white stuff, too. It is made exactly the same way as the fake variety often needed to supplement the real thing on ski slopes.

So while the spa is fun and therapeutic it also offers all the elements that a true luxury and pampering service provides. There are massages, scrubs, facials, manicures, pedicures, a hairdresser and barber. There is also a fitness area with state-of-the-art facilities, plus Kinesis and TRX equipment and a studio for yoga, pilates and Zumba.

But it is the Nordic bathing experience which is at the heart of the spa, and while most guests are familiar with saunas, hot tubs, Jacuzzis and plunge pools (although not necessarily in such settings), the spa team has introduced special sauna evenings to help unravel and reveal the benefits of the process. This is particularly useful for those who have never tried a sauna but can now do so under expert guidance.

These sessions are normally offered on two or three evenings during a cruise and are limited to 10 people, so booking is advisable. Each visit is accompanied by a

member of staff and begins in the sauna for about 10 minutes, after which the group is moved to the snow grotto among much hilarity. Some just pop their head inside while the braver stay for a few minutes... and it is seeing how easily fellow guests take to the experience that encourages others to return after a second sauna.

During the second sauna, birch twigs and leaves are introduced. Traditionally, these are used in massaging the body to heighten the sensation of the heat - dry brushing has the same effect.

Next it is time for a return to the snow grotto, a visit which can, for some, last up to four or five minutes and snow balls are often brought into play to end the session in laughter and fun. Special herbal teas are then served before guests head for the main pool, to enjoy a massage or to get ready for dinner.

Not only are the sauna evenings becoming increasingly popular they are a clever way to introduce the snow grotto. And while the bathing area is the heart of the spa, the treatment area is the serene spirit of it. Decorated in shades of silver, taupe and grey with images of birch forests, it is a super-calming area

“After a few minutes nobody is in any doubt that they are in a room made of snow - proper white stuff, too”

with eight treatment rooms, including one dedicated to couples, each with its own shower room.

The body treatments, which may last for 50 or 80 minutes, concentrate on *Stille* (calm and relaxing), *Ren* (cleansing and detoxing) or *Dybde* (the traditional deep-tissue focus). Meanwhile, the beauty treatments offer *Form* (shaping with low impact light technology) *Fin* (bespoke anti-ageing elements) and *Vakkler* (also using light technology to help hydrate).

All of the treatments are offered to both men and women, while a separate men's section includes a classic shave and beard trim. And to underline the clean Nordic philosophy of the spa, all the products used are organic - Organic Pharmacy for body and beauty and Rahua (a natural cleansing product based on coconut oil) for hair. Even the specially selected yoga clothes on sale from Swedish company KW Collection use environmentally conscious materials.

There is also the classic Nordic touch to bring home as a memento - hand-knitted woollen hats complete with pom-pom. These are the work of the grandmother of the group's spa director who at 95 is still producing peerless winter warmers.

All of this Nordic delight is overseen by spa manager, Michael Simoes, a Canadian who knows a thing or two about snow and the benefits of heat and cold.

Michael clearly loves the snow grotto and the delight it brings to guests. "They are not sure what to expect and think it cannot possibly be real, so there is a lot of laughter when they first see it and even more when they first try it," he says.

The Nordic bathing area is especially popular on sea days, or even late afternoon when guests return from excursions, as the area remains open until 8pm.

A kinesiologist by training and having worked in an injury rehabilitation clinic for 12 years, Michael knows the benefits that the mixing of heat and cold can have on the body, its injuries and its movement, better than most.

And while this is his first venture at sea, he has already taken to it like the proverbial duck. "I've always loved being by the water," he says. "I now live near the sea in Lisbon and have worked in Portuguese spas close to the Atlantic, so now actually floating on the water is great."

His last assignment before joining the ship was in Jordan at a spa on the Dead Sea - quite different from the Mediterranean or the Baltic where Viking Star heads during the summer.

"I love waking up in a different city every day and I am especially fond of Copenhagen," he says, "but most of all I love the movement of the waves and the sound of the sea."

INTO THE MIDNIGHT SUN

15 DAYS FROM £5,090PP

£500PP
EARLY
BOOKING
DISCOUNT

FREE WI-FI*

FREE USE
OF SPA

Honningsvåg, Norway

ALL THIS IS INCLUDED:

- ✓ 15-day cruise: Bergen to London
- ✓ Stateroom or suite with a private veranda
- ✓ All on board meals in a choice of 11 dining venues, including many alfresco options
- ✓ Quality house wine, beer and soft drinks with lunch and dinner on board
- ✓ On board entertainment and use of spa
- ✓ Free tea and coffee, 24/7
- ✓ Free excursion in almost every port
- ✓ Free Wi-Fi on board*
- ✓ Pre-paid on board gratuities
- ✓ Scheduled flight to or from Bergen

YOUR JOURNEY:

- Days 1-2** Bergen, Norway
- Day 3** Geiranger, Norway
- Day 4** Kristiansund, Norway
- Day 5** Cruise the Norwegian Sea
- Day 6** Tromsø, Norway
- Day 7** Honningsvåg, Norway
- Day 8** Lofoten (Svolvær), Norway
- Day 9** Cruise the Norwegian Sea
- Day 10** Shetland Islands (Lerwick), Scotland
- Day 11** Orkney Islands (Kirkwall), Scotland
- Day 12** Edinburgh (Newhaven Harbour), Scotland
- Day 13** Cruise the North Sea
- Days 14-15** London, UK

2017 departure dates

Prices per person, based on double occupancy

| | VERANDA | DELUXE VERANDA | PENTHOUSE VERANDA | PENTHOUSE JUNIOR SUITE | EXPLORER SUITE |
|----------------|----------|----------------|-------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| June 3, 17, 25 | SOLD OUT | £5,590 | £6,590 | £7,490 | £9,290 |
| July 1, 9 | | £5,090 | £6,090 | £6,990 | £8,790 |

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A STAR IS BORN CREW STORIES

Meet the Vikings behind your perfect cruise

The exceptional crew on board Viking Star have one aim – to ensure every guest's comfort and care, says **Jo Foley**

THE CAPTAIN

Norwegian Captain Atle Knutsen is possibly the proudest man on the high seas. He has been at sea for almost 35 years having first worked on ferries at the age of 14 discovering how to navigate his homeland's spectacular fjords.

Over the years he has worked for a number of cruise lines, an occupation he loves, although he recently took a break from such pleasure crafts to take command of the Sea Launch Odyssey whose task it was to send commercial satellites into space. "We launched from the equator in the Pacific Ocean," he explains with relish.

His joy now is the new Viking Star. "It is the perfect size, as far as I am concerned," he says of its 930-guest capacity. And to service this boutique vessel he commands a crew of 470 members composed of almost 20 nationalities.

"We have a small United Nations on board and we are very good at getting along together," he says. "We know how to negotiate and how to make things work for us all."

During his time on board (most captains serve 12 weeks on and then have a 12-week break) he rarely leaves the ship. "I like to be on hand for whatever is going on," he says.

On shore when he is on leave, he shares his time between Bergen and San Diego. "One place is wet – although in Norway you can enjoy three seasons in one afternoon – and the other place is dry." And he relaxes by indulging his passion for home improvements and tinkering with his car.

"My very first car was a Morris Marina. I learnt everything I know about engines from that," he says. He's obviously the man to have on your side when anything needs fixing.

THE HOTEL MANAGER

Karl Eckl must be a difficult man to be married to – he is always falling in love. Fortunately for his wife, it is invariably with a ship. His current love is the Viking Star which he joined this year.

He positively glows with pride about the vessel, what it is about, what it offers, where it goes and who works on it. He is currently responsible for some 400 staff

“There is something special about being at sea, meeting new people, making new connections”



Top team Clockwise from main picture, Viking Star in Santorini; Aaron Syfert; Karl Eckl; Captain Knutsen



who care for the guests' every need from staterooms to cuisine. While this is paramount on any cruise ship he is also minutely concerned with how his staff are looked after.



"I would think about 95 per cent of my time is devoted to crew welfare... because if you have good, happy and well-adjusted staff, you know the guests are looked after," he says.

"We all watch out for each other, we get to know each other and we take care of each other, that is what a good crew is like."

When employing new recruits, experience is not the main requisite. "I'm looking for attitude – enthusiasm and willingness – the rest can be taught and learnt," he maintains.

He began his career in hospitality on dry land with such hotel luminaries as Hilton and Kempinski until 16 years ago, when he was lured to sea.

Half-German, half-Romanian, Eckl was brought up in Bavaria but moved to South Africa when he married a local girl, who at the time was the spa manager on the ship he was looking after.

On board he keeps fit by running on the treadmill for 45

minutes each day. "It is also my meditation," he explains.

THE CRUISE DIRECTOR

Aaron Syfert is a man with a mission. He wants to ensure that what he does for both guests and performers is to "make memories". A Texan with a degree in vocal performance, Aaron was a performer on land before finding a passion for cruise ships some 14 years ago.

"There is something special about being at sea, meeting new people, making those connections, visiting new destinations and the excitement

you get from guests experiencing all of these things in a short time. That's what I love". He also encourages the on-board performers to visit the ports and take the excursions offered during the cruise, "I want to make memories for them, too."

As cruise director and voice of the ship, he makes the announcements, chivvies the dawdlers and excites the audiences at lectures and shows – he is constantly on call, although he does try to get off the ship every three days or so even if it's for just an hour.

If there is one drawback to



being a cruise professional for Aaron it is weight-watching. "I come on board with two different suit sizes, and if I'm not too careful we do also have a great tailor who can let them out for me as well."

THE ITINERARY PLANNER

Matt Grimes joined Viking Cruises in 2012 and has since helped the line introduce some of the most exciting itineraries at sea. Constantly researching, visiting new places and testing what a Viking guest would like, he claims his job is "an itinerary planner's dream" as more and more exciting opportunities open.

"Very early on in the project we asked detailed questions of our Viking guests and what was extraordinary is that, although we had our own vision of what we would like to do, it totally coincided with what the guests wanted," he says.

One of the most popular is the Viking Homelands cruise – a 15-day extravaganza of Nordic cities – Stockholm, Helsinki, Copenhagen, St Petersburg, the Baltic and three Norwegian ports of Stavanger, Eidfjord and Bergen.

"What is special to our voyages," he explains, "is that we are in a port almost every single day and, on a 14-night cruise, that's a lot of excursions." Best of all for guests is that one free excursion is included in the overall price, almost every day. "Often guests will take an early excursion, come back to the ship for lunch and a rest... and then head off on their own for the afternoon to explore more, which is not surprising when you consider the natural beauty with which we are surrounded by most of the time."

THE DOCTOR

Dragan Pjesivac is the kind of medic who will laugh you better. A big, jovial Montenegrin he has been at sea for the past seven years and joined Viking Star at its launch. With two nurses – one South African and one from the Philippines, he provides 24-hour care for staff and crew.

"This is a new ship and has the best facilities and equipment on board which includes not just a lab and pharmacy but ICU, an isolation room and X-ray area. In fact our facility is a complete pre-hospital unit," he explains proudly. Dragan may live on one of the most beautiful coastlines of the Adriatic, the Gulf of Kotor, but he loves to travel and still seeks jaw-dropping beauty wherever he goes.

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