



The deserted ship in port

high reputations, but we couldn't tear ourselves away from Blu. Although we did sneak into the Oceanview Café for tea, fresh pizza or Sushi when we felt peckish mid-afternoon. In spite of this we never felt overfed at Blu as each dish was so delicate and well prepared. And remember, there is no charge to use this restaurant, or for the dishes, everything is included except drinks.

A special mention should be made of our Sommelier, Malgorzata, whose knowledge of her wines and the ability to match the food flavour with the correct wine that would complement the dish was outstanding. She always had a great suggestion to accompany each dish, and never got it wrong, at least not for us. The other wine waiters were good, but she was a true wine 'aficionado'.

This brings us on to the Celebrity Drinks Package. If you have chosen this option, for one single payment for the entire voyage (44US\$ per person, per night), you can choose from any beers up to 5 US\$, cocktails and wine by the glass up to 8 US\$ a serving with the classic package. Last year the wine, by the glass, was restricted to 6 US\$ per glass, but this year Celerity has increased that to 8 US\$ and combined it with a vastly improved selection of wines. Whoever was responsible for this year's selection, presumably for all the

fleet, should be congratulated on their choices. Last year's options were sometimes disappointing and restricted; this year's exceeded our expectations in every way. If you have the package, this really leaves your Sommelier free to choose exactly the right glass of wine to accompany each dish, rather than being committed to buying wine by the bottle. There is no restriction on how many glasses you can have, apart from your ability to walk out of the restaurant in a straight line! The drinks package includes everything you drink from cocktails around the pool or in one of the many bars, clubs and restaurants to drinks with the nightly show in the theatre. It even covers the speciality coffees. It really represents excellent value, unless you are teetotal. Highly recommended.

One of the great advantages of the size of these ships is that there really is space for everyone, even around the pools. We always found loungers available, even on days at sea when everyone (hopefully) is on board. The vast indoor Solarium with its own heated pool is a boon if you get a rainy or windy day. Pool Butlers and waiters are everywhere. Despite the ship's size, it is impeccably clean, if the old expression that 'cleanliness is next to Godliness' is true, this ship could be close to 'Holy'.

Cleaning never stops 24 hours a day. It really is immaculate, and the staff keep it that way. That goes for your stateroom as well, both morning and evening, everything is cleaned and refreshed, towels replaced, veranda cleaned and tidied, nothing is left out of place.

Staff training must be outstanding; everyone smiles and greets you wherever you meet them and it's not a plastic smile, it's a genuine friendly greeting. Even on the day of boarding, when everyone comes early to have their first lunch on board and the Ocean Café is crowded, if you look a little lost, a waiter will come up and ask if you need help and show you where to find what you are looking for.

It's normal for Celebrity guests to be welcomed back after a day off the ship in port, with a cold towel and a refreshing cold drink. On our second day in Venice, the skies opened up and anyone who went ashore came back soaking wet. This time they were greeted by hot chocolate. That's attention to detail.

In closing, it would be very unfair not to mention the outstanding theatre, shows and presentations. The theatre itself is everything you would expect of a good West End theatre, the Solstice Orchestra are outstanding and all the acts of the highest



Celebrity Soltice at port in Kotor, Montenegro

international quality. There are two shows every night, designed to fit in with your dining time, some are spectaculars with all the dancers and singers, and sets to match (don't be surprised when a dancer in a dramatic costume floats past you in the 'dress circle'), others are international acts, singers, illusionists, musicians. Each show lasts an hour, and then you may well

head to the peace and quiet of your stateroom, or to one of the many venues throughout the ship, inside and out, where the party carries on into the wee small hours.

Bored, you won't be, rested and refreshed you will be, not to mention wonderfully fed and

entertained. On top of that, you get to visit a lot of interesting places, the choices are all yours.

We departed from Barcelona, visiting Nice, Florence/Pisa, Rome, Naples, Dubrovnik, Venice (staying overnight) and Montenegro, returning to Barcelona. PL

Win one of these wonderful cruises for two at next week's Golden Triangle Exhibition on 29 & 30 October at the Vila Sol Hotel in Vilamoura. Just fill in the free entry form at Celebrity Cruises on Stand 79



Onboard activities include:

- Trivia contests and games
- Hot Glass Show, Scrapbooking
- Beyond the Podium enrichment series
- Dance competitions and parties
- Dessert Extravaganza
- Interactive Theme Parties
- Officers vs Guest Pool Volleyball challenge, Table tennis tournament
- Cook this, not that, Star Chefs Cooking Competition, Cake decorating demo, Fruit & Vegetable Carving, Global Flavours Cooking Show, Mixology bar tenders demos
- Bingo, Guest's Poker Challenge, Blackjack challenge,
- Fashion Show, Health & Beauty Seminars
- Newlywed Comedy Game Show
- Movies
- Barefoot concert on the lawn
- British Pub Night
- Soltice's Got Talent
- plus Live music all over the ship, including A Capela, classical string, big band, small band, Jazz piano, acoustic guitar and more

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