

OASIS OF THE SEAS: A FLOATING HOLIDAY DESTINATION?



The Oasis of the Seas was floated in November from dry dock to wet dock in Turku, Finland and is scheduled for launch in December 2009. With its length of 360 meters and space for 5,400 guests it is the biggest cruise ship in the world. Its itinerary is set in the Western and Eastern Caribbean. But why will people actually book a cruise on such a mega cruise ship?

Passengers will be accommodated in 27,000 rooms of which some are more extravagant than others. People willing to spend a bit more can try the Royal Loft Suite which is 1,524sq ft of pure indulgence including a library and piano.

The Oasis of the Seas is said to be the most innovative cruise ship ever designed and will feature the cruise line's new "Neighbourhood" concept of 7 themed areas namely Central Park, Boardwalk, the Royal Promenade, the Pool and Sports Zone, Vitality at Sea Spa and Fitness Center, Entertainment Place and the Youth Zone. With its levitating bar and amphitheatre which overlooks the ocean Royal Caribbean set totally new standards in the cruise ship industry. Other Royal Caribbean features on Oasis of the Seas include an ice skating rink, boxing ring, rock climbing walls, surf park, full basketball/sports court, the Vintages wine bar, and much more.

With all those features and with the affectionately designed landscapes onboard the ship the Oasis of the Seas comes close to the image of a small city. Everything you need for vacation is onboard whether it is accommodation, entertainment, shopping or dining facilities, healthcare, spa and wellness, sporting equipment or child care.

Obviously cruise ships have changed over time. While in the past people booked a cruise to see the different ports of call and focused on excursions, today the cruise passengers of such a mega vessel might not set their priorities like this. It seems possible that the itinerary becomes kind of negligible and the ship itself comes more and more to the fore. For the cruise line this brings up totally new perspectives as the passengers no longer see the ship as transportation but as active holiday destination. Passengers spending more time on the ship generate more onboard revenue. But this leads us to the question in how far cruises might change in the future. If the ship becomes the destination itself and itineraries and excursions become of secondary interest one could just anchor a cruise ship like the Oasis of the Seas somewhere on a coast like a floating hotel. It will be interesting to watch the changes which will obviously occur to the industry at the latest when the second mega ship comes to the seas.

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