

# Cruising around the World with Faith in Mind

A faith based cruise is a voyage through the high seas. Of the major religions of the world, the Christian faith takes the icing on the cake for organizing the highest number of faith based cruises. Coming a respectable second is the new age movement, whose leadership hosts seminars in exquisite islands across the globe.



A recent article in the Travel Market Report by Andrew Sheivachman opines that the cruise market is upbeat going into the next year, this is following a recent slump in bookings. This giddy mood might not be entirely misplaced granted that the World Tourism Organization in its recent report cited that in the US alone there are about some 50,000 churches with religious travel programs. Of these 50,000, it is estimated that a respectable percentage will in one way or another embark on a faith based cruise.

Perhaps the dry statistics presented above may blur how you see the growth of faith based cruises. A Time Magazine article (2006, August 14) cited three reasons as to why religious tourism was set to exponentially grow over successive years. First was the issue of demographics – with more people identifying themselves as religious in one form or another, religious travel is bound to expand. Secondly, there is a boom in international travel. This is on account of high amounts of disposable income among citizens from different nations globally. Thirdly, individuals are constantly looking for a personal experience of their faith and travel offers the best experience for such an expression.

Undoubtedly, the reasons cited above have definitely been eroded in recent years on account of the ravages of the economic meltdown. However as cited earlier in the article, there is a revision of this situation as the global economy begins to claw out of the trenches.



A cursory glance of the itineraries of these faith based cruises can aid in helping you understand why they offer a welcome relief from the austere bearing of a typical religious setting.

**The Christian Traveler Finder** organizes 10 day cruises along the Aegan coast of Greece. The voyage kicks on from Corinth (the Biblical book of Corinthians is based on this city), the voyage then proceeds to Rhodes – an island where the Apostle Paul landed, Patmos, Turkey – where the book of Revelation was authored by John, Thessalonica, Greece – a port town that forms the subject matter of the book of Thessalonians, and finally back to Athens. This voyage brings the Pauline epistles to light in a way that can hardly be described by words.

**The Christian Classic cruise** that operates in Canada is mainly focused on providing cruise services that are designed to have Christians interact with individuals who profess the same faith. This is not a location themed cruise – although the organizer takes passengers to beautiful sites – but a trip to simply mingle with likeminded folk. The ten day tour travels from Canada to Alaska with stops at Vancouver, British Columbia, and several Alaska destinations: Seward, Hubbard Glacier, Juneau, Skagway, Icy Straight Point, Ketchikan and the Inside Passage.



The third cruise is dubbed the **Mediterranean Christian cruise**. This is a location themed cruise and in ten days one sails through some major locations in Bible history. The cruise begins at Malta, then proceeds to Rome, Ephesus, Santori, Corinth, Tyre, Istanbul, and back to Rome. You straddle between the ports of Europe and Asia, and visit some main land churches where the first churches were established. This is a tour that is organized by the Living Passages tour company.

Popular destinations of faith based cruises are typically confined to the Holy Land – Israel; the land of Greece where individuals visit several of the islands that the apostle Paul visited during his sojourns, the Mediterranean, and some island nations spread out over Oceania. The long and short of the matter is this: Religious tourism is not just a fad but a phenomenon that has cut itself a unique niche in the world of travel. Estimated to be worth in excess of \$10 billion in terms of the revenue generated, this is definitely a sector which is still open up for exploitation by interlinking it with various sectors of the economy.

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