

# CRUISE TRENDS 2016: FAVORABLE WINDS POINT TO HAVANA



It's that time of the year again - the beginning of cruise season, which sees everyone running for the docks and grasping for the best promotions. It is also the perfect opportunity to have a look at the cruise trends as people climb aboard the ships to spend a while enjoying the relative calm of high seas.

According to a recent Travelzoo study, 62% of Americans are planning on going abroad on vacation this year (+32% on 2015), and not all of them will be going by plane. Thousands of US citizens will be boarding cruise ships during this season. Here are the cruise trends according to Travelzoo experts' early forecasts.

## **Perks Are Travelers' Choice**

Industry experts have been noting for a while that cruise ships have started offering a choice of personalized, complementary free gifts and activities instead of the usual pre-packaged offers.

This trend is to be accentuated and expanded in 2016, going far beyond free drinks and into really unique experiences like travelling on a small submarine, complete with fishing and other kinds of accessories.

More traditional offers will also be expanded to accommodate and customize cruise goers' experiences and make this kind of vacation even more attractive, as is the case with the Queen Mary 2, whose renovations will certainly be a treat for pets and their owners, who can go on the cruise together.

## **Bigger Ships, More Space, More Savings**

Ships are still getting bigger and bigger - that has been the cruise trend for a couple of years. Royal Caribbean's Harmony of the Seas and her sisters are just an example of that.

Now, everyone who is familiar with the laws of availability and demand can see that bigger ships mean more seats, and more seats will likely translate into lower prices and better deals for those who dream of sailing the high seas aboard a luxury cruise.

## **Cuban Mojitos Are the Drink of Choice on Board**

While these cruise trends are quite interesting to look at, the one question to ask is: "Where will the good winds be taking the travelers this year?" And the answer is, perhaps surprisingly, Cuba.

It's unclear whether all of the small and big ships taking people towards Havana's warm nights allow cigar smoking on board, but the land of salsa dancing is certainly being flooded by hordes of trendy, mojito-sipping tourists, brought in by international ships.

More importantly, the MS Saint Laurent, a small ship from Hallmark's line will be the first to provide a small people-to-people trip to the island in 50 years, something historic and only made possible by

the recent normalization of relations between Havana and Washington.

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