



A TRUE OCEAN HOME

AZAMARA OFFERS A LUXURY CRUISE EXPERIENCE TO THE WORLD'S MOST BEAUTIFUL DESTINATIONS

words by **Debbi K. Kickham** and **William D. Kickham**

There's an old saying: the best two days in a boat owner's life are the day he buys his vessel – and the day he sells it. Some people simply don't want their own yacht. Instead, they prefer to cruise on a posh luxury liner and leave the steering – and the headaches – to someone else.

Which is exactly why sailing on Azamara Club Cruises is such a joy. With two stylish and spacious liners – *Journey* and its identical sister ship *Quest*, which each carry only 686 passengers – Azamara makes cruising easy, elegant, fabulous and fun.

Why Azamara? For a start, you're on a floating boutique hotel with first-class service. Azamara also offers more overnight and longer port stays than many other leading cruise lines. So, for example, after hitting the beach of St. Tropez on France's Côte d'Azur, you can enjoy the nightlife instead of departing for the next port mid-afternoon.

Further distinguishing itself from the competition, Azamara is renowned for its "Aza-mazing experiences," which are complimentary for all passengers. In the Turkish port of Kusadasi, for instance, Azamara hosts an exclusive and memorable classical music concert and reception in



the ancient Roman amphitheater in Ephesus.

That said, you should book sooner rather than later for Azamara's summer 2016 cruises to the Mediterranean – the top suites sell out quickly, especially on popular sailings, which include stops at the Monaco Grand Prix in May and British Open in July.

Recently, Azamara's *Journey* embarked on a 16-day, extended trans-Atlantic itinerary from Miami to Athens, Greece, reflecting the new trend of passengers booking longer sailings from 14 to 100 days.

According to the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), more passengers are foregoing the typical seven-night sailings – by the time you acclimate to the ship and

Cruise control
Azamara's *Journey* charts a course to some of the world's most exotic locales, accommodating just 686 passengers in consummate style.

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF AZAMARA CLUB CRUISES

establish a routine, it's time to disembark. As a result, experienced cruisers now book much longer itineraries.

Azamara also doesn't have a formal dress code, with no jackets or ties required for men. Pack your sexiest Chanel LBDs and snazzy Tom Ford ensembles because casual elegance is the name of the game.

The cuisine on Azamara is excellent, from simple paninis and culinary-themed nights in the informal Windows Café to the delicacies of the main dining room Discoveries, where lobster is ever-popular.

Daily specials include vegan, vegetarian, healthy-choice and gluten-free options, along with 12 flavors of gelato. Gourmands will also rave about the Chef's Table, which, at \$95 a person, offers Italian, French or California cuisine complemented by distinctive wines.

Two alternative onboard restaurants include Aqualina for elegant Mediterranean fare and Prime C, a steakhouse that equals any starred restaurant in New York City. These specialty restaurants charge a nominal fee of \$25 per person, a small price to pay for a gourmet experience.

If you've booked a suite, such as the 266-square-foot Continent, it comes with luxury amenities, spacious closets, a bathtub, butler services, Internet access and four bottles of top-shelf spirits.

All alcohol, soft drinks and gratuities are included with every Azamara cabin as well as 19 different complimentary table wines. You can also bring your own alcohol on board for a \$10 corkage fee. Dessert wines cost extra, so pack that special bottle of Château d'Yquem you've been saving.

When it's time for some pampering, the Astral spa's facials, manicures and pedicures, as well as its specialist teeth-whitening and skin treatments, are just the ticket.

Adjoining the spa is a fitness center with a wide array of Life Fitness equipment featuring cardio theater treadmills, ellipticals and cycles along with weight machines. The pool? It's outdoors, spacious, quiet and inviting.

Azamara's nightly entertainment is also topnotch, from classical music performances in the intimate Cabaret theater to comedic pianist Richard Rubin – a cross between Elvis Costello and Woody Allen – who typically plays to a packed and appreciative house in the Casino Lounge.

Indulge at the Caviar & Champagne Bar, and if you're celebrating an occasion, birthday or anniversary, Azamara's talented chefs will gladly prepare a special meal or cake.

THE DETAILS

For more information, visit azamaracruises.com.

Cruise aficionados Linda and Daniel Bartlow of Arkansas have sailed on eight Azamara cruises since 2010. "We like the amazing service, the size of the ship and

how the crew recognizes us and takes care of us," they enthused. "Ever since we found Azamara, we don't travel on any other ships." **OH**



Silver service
Azamara doesn't have a formal dress code on either of its two liners but casual elegance is the name of the game.

