

INSIDE VIEW:

THE BEST VALUE

**A conversation with Anuj Khosla,
Hotel Director, Carnival Glory**

by

Richard H. Wagner

Carnival Cruise Lines is the only company that Anuj Khosla has worked for since graduating from hotel college in Mumbai, India, 19 years ago. It was the first company that he applied to and one that none of his classmates considered. "When you leave college, you want to try various things and that is why I tried something so different than any of my colleagues."

Now, after having been a Carnival hotel director for ten years, Mr. Khosla has no doubt he made the right choice. "So many of my friends and so many of my classmates from the college have changed jobs, but I haven't because I feel very happy with the operation that I am involved in. I am happy with the job, very happy with Carnival, very happy with how they treat their employees. The communication that I have with the senior management in the [main] office is very encouraging. At the end of the day, you feel you have achieved things; you feel that you have made things better."

Today, Mr. Khosla is the Hotel Director of the Conquest-class mega-cruise ship Carnival Glory. The Glory sails in some quite competitive waters. In the winter months, she alternates between sailing Eastern Caribbean and Western Caribbean itineraries out of

Miami, Florida while in the summer, she sails out of New York, primarily to Eastern Canada. People interested in sailing out of these ports on such itineraries have several choices as there are a number of other ships doing similar cruises out of those ports. Why then should guests choose Carnival Glory?

"Glory is a great vessel with the amount of facilities that we have aboard. The crew is very well-trained and well-motivated to take care of all the guests. It is going to be a great vacation experience."

With regard to facilities, Glory is a very large ship. She came out of the shipyard with many facilities but also with room to grow. "We had a recent re-fit during [Glory's 2009] dry dock. We added some facilities to the product - - the Serenity area, which is on forward deck 12 and 14.. It is an adult area where you have two whirlpools, you have hammocks, you have seating which is very comfortable. It's very nice set-up there. We added the big [outdoor LED] screen up in the Lido area. We made a lot of changes of carpet in all the lounges. In our Red Sail Restaurant, we re-did all the tiles in that area. We added balconies up on Deck 11. There were quite a few additions during our dry dock."

Another recent addition was the Circle C area

for younger teenagers. Glory is a very family-oriented ship and this facility augments the already extensive facilities for children and younger passengers. "We have 800 kids onboard. But you do not see them onboard. They are all entertained with Camp Carnival. The counselors are taking good care of the kids and keeping them entertained. We have loads of activities and we attract them with activities."

Not only are the children entertained but this organized program also enhances the adult guests' cruise experience. "As you go by the pool, you will see children around but it's a good balance. You do not want to see all the kids running around everywhere. You don't want to be over-run by anyone whether it is youngsters or drinkers. And we don't have that, we have a good balance."

The cruise experience on Glory has also been enhanced by using existing facilities in new ways. For example, Glory was the first ship in the Carnival fleet to have a comedy club. The club features two comedians who alternate doing stand-up comedy shows. There are family-friendly shows as well as R-rated shows. The club atmosphere was created by using the large aft lounge (the Ebony Lounge), which already had a bar, a stage and cabaret seating, as the comedy club.

Along the same lines, Carnival has implemented a flexible dining option for dinner in the main dining rooms. "We have done it in a very structured way. Right now, the upper level of the Golden Dining Room is Your Time dining. On average about 380 or so guests opt for that. There is growing [demand for this option] so we are eventually also going to be converting [Golden's] lower level also into Your Time Dining. Then the early and late seating will [just be in] the Platinum Dining Room until the need is felt for changing again. It seems to be a really good option for people when you want to do another show or go to bed a bit early or a bit late, or want to see the comedy club."

Turning to the professionalism of the crew, on the day that this interview was done, Glory had just achieved the maximum score on a surprise inspection by the Canadian public health service. "It is a great achievement for all the crew who work very hard to maintain the standards. It's a very good team effort."

Still, Mr. Khosla was not content to rest on the ship's laurels. "It is never really perfect. You can get 100 but that does not mean that things are still perfect.



Anuj Khosla

I think you just have to be everywhere all the time. You address the most things that you possibly can. You try to have your management team do the same and have all these various pairs of eyes looking out to make sure that the product is right."

One of the reasons that Glory has such a professional crew is the cooperation both within its departments and between its departments. "The team that I have onboard is fantastic - - the housekeeping manager, the food and beverage manager, the chef. There is also great cooperation between the captain, the chief engineer, the staff captain and the staff chief - - it is a very good team. I think once you have a very good thing going on, everybody else who comes onboard, comes and fits into that way of being. Its great, it takes a long time to achieve that, to get good harmony going, good cooperation between everyone."

In addition to doing well on government inspec-



Carnival Glory

tions, Glory also does well with passengers. An indication of this is the high number of repeat passengers that sail on Glory. "On this cruise we have about 1,440 repeat guests out of about 3,500 guests onboard. On some other cruises like when we are out of Miami, our repeat guest count is even higher. I would say that 1,400 to 1,500 is the fluctuation. It is a very large number of people that are onboard that are aware of what Carnival is and what is offered. It is great. We want people to come back." Of course, these figures do not include the experienced cruisers from other cruise lines who try the Glory.

When Glory is sailing out of New York, or Charleston or Norfolk, which she does in the Spring and the Fall, many of the guests are from the area surrounding those ports. People prefer to drive to the ship or take local transportation rather than fly for several hours to a cruise port. However, "a lot of people from outside the New York region come here."

Glory attracts "a lot of people from all over. We have a lot of non-US citizens as well." Some of these people combine a vacation in New York with a cruise on the Glory. However, others come to Glory because the cruise presents the right combination of ship, price and itinerary. "With the internet, it is so easy - - you search and you find the best value."