

*INSIDE VIEW:*

# PRESENTING EPIC CHOICES

Hotel Director Denis Prguda and Entertainment Director Julie Valeriotte talk about Norwegian Epic

by

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Norwegian Cruise Line has long been known for offering guests choices so that they can decide for themselves how their cruise experience will unfold. Norwegian Epic, NCL's latest and largest ship, was designed so as to offer guests not only more options but also new and different choices - - all at a quality level more often associated with land-based resorts than with cruise ships.

Two of the key players in turning this concept into reality are Hotel Director Denis Prguda and Entertainment Director Julie Valeriotte. Both speak with contagious enthusiasm about their ship.

"The Epic is a different ship; completely different than any NCL or other company's ship. It will stay unique as it is because they are not building any more of these ships," says Prguda.

What makes Norwegian Epic different from the ships that have gone before it? The first thing Prguda points to is the unique accommodations offered on Epic. "You purchase [one of the studios] cabins and you pay a single [occupancy] price in comparison to [other ships] where you pay a supplement. They have fantastic interiors - - modern and well-accepted."

In addition, Norwegian Epic has two decks dedicated exclusively to luxury travel. "75 top suites, with concierge service, private dining, private decks, and private bars. It is all here. I call it 'Silver Seas within a 4,000 guest ship'. You can go downtown [to the public rooms and dining venues on] decks 5, 6 and 7. But if you want luxury, you come up to decks 16 and 17." Thus, guests traveling in one of these suites can utilize all of Epic's extensive dining and entertainment facili-



ties but when he or she so desires, the guest can retreat into Epic's exclusive luxury enclave.

Epic also has caters to young families. "We are a family cruising company. We have Nickelodeon onboard; a huge kids' center; and a huge teen center, which is completely separate. The pool area has a couple of pools for kids and family."

"But for those guests who want a quiet area, we have an adults-only area with a huge screen, a pool, a little bar and a grill as well. It is called Spice H2O. We also have a Freestyle deck, which is very popular with Europeans. Also in the same area is the quiet zone, which doesn't have any music. There are lots of choices."

With regard to dining, Epic is not merely a larger version of earlier NCL ships. New venues have been created and earlier ideas have been developed beyond their previous incarnations. These venues often blur the traditional line between dining and entertainment venues. "We have added the Brazilian churrascaria, which is an amazing concept and very popular. The Noodle Bar is another popular venue which we have implemented here. We have a couple of cooks just making noodles right in front of you. It is a show galley right in the open. The show tables of the Teppanaki are packed every single night. During the Cirque Dreams show we serve a set menu, which is also popular. It is sold out basically every night - - both shows, 270 people, six nights a week."

New concepts have also been developed for the bars and lounges. For example, Epic has the first ocean-going ice bar where guests can experience signature cocktails in a room where not just the bar but also the walls are ice covered. "It is sold out every single week. Every 45 minutes, we [allow] a certain amount of guests into the Ice Bar. For \$20, you get two free drinks. It's an amazing experience for the guests altogether. Again, it is unique in the cruise industry."

NCL's Jewel-class ships feature bowling alleys in their Bliss Lounge nightclubs. On Epic, however, not only is there a bowling alley in the Bliss Lounge but there also are bowling alleys in a new venue that is styled after a neighborhood bar and grill. "Popular again - - O'Sheehan's Bar, which is named after our CEO Kevin Sheehan. It is open 24/7 with a full set menu, which is another addition on the Epic."

Valeriote is similarly enthusiastic about the



*Entertainment Director Julie Valeriote and Hotel Director Denis Prguda have fun with a cool occupant of Epic's Ice Bar*

entertainment experience offered on Epic. "Incredible - - there is no other ship like it. It is non-stop. It is always alive at all times of the day - - from the Aqua Park to the Entertainment complex."

"We have the Blue Man Group, which is a show known all around the world. We have the Legends in Concert, which is a very popular Las Vegas show that has been running for a decade. We have the Cirque Dreams, here on a moving ship so there is an element of danger. Second City, sketch and improv comedy. Then we have like a pub-style show Howl at the Moon, which is interactive fun with the guests. We have poolside movies. We have Fat Cats with blues and jazz. There is show band music everywhere - - in the atrium and in the restaurants. We have a show that happens in the Manhattan Room [restaurant], which is a Motown version of Legends in Concert called 'Legends Unplugged.'"

Although Epic is a third again larger than earlier NCL ships, each venue on Epic is not necessarily larger than the venues on the earlier ships. With many more passengers onboard, much thought had to go into the flow of passengers around the ship so as to avoid overcrowding and to ensure that all of the guests would have the opportunity to see Epic's entertainment offerings. "We offer the entertainment events more often. You pick when you want to go to the shows and book it through the reservation system." Guests can book shows onboard at the ship's box office or through the interactive televisions in their staterooms.

Advanced technology is also utilized to enhance the entertainment offerings. One example is the daily television show that the cruise director does to inform the guests about what is happening onboard. "We have a full broadcast center down in the atrium with a green screen and the capability of broadcasting live events around the ship. We have this thing called 'Epic Live.' We have people up in the bandstand and some areas on Deck 5 and we have various hosts. [Like a network television morning show,] the cruise director stands in front of the green screen and we can put in any background. It will be broadcast to all of the TVs and recorded so it can be

played over. It is incredible what we can do there."

"The technical part of the ship is amazingly nice, when it comes to audio, video and any kind of technical aspect," adds Prguda. "The quality of the ship from the carpets to the interior, the exterior - - it is all high quality."

So what sort of person does the Epic attract? "It is pretty much a mixture of everything - - families, singles, couples. Between 39 and about 46 is the average age on the Epic. We have something happening for everyone."



*Norwegian Epic*