

INSIDE VIEW:

WHAT'S NEW ON NORWEGIAN GEM

A conversation with Hotel Director Steve Knott.

by

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Norwegian Gem is a popular cruise ship that attracts many repeat passengers. When a company has a winning formula, there is a temptation not to tamper with it. However, while there is a need to maintain what has been successful in the past, there is also the need to ensure that the experience remains vibrant so as to ensure that it does not become stale for past guests and so that it will continue to attract new guests. Therefore, Norwegian Cruise Lines continues to embellish the Gem experience with add new things. I spoke with Hotel Director Steve Knott about some of the more recent enhancements.

Dining

Norwegian has long been known for offering guests numerous dining options. In February 2012, it added a new dining venue to the Gem, the Moderno Churrascaria, which is a Brazilian steakhouse. "Our

shoreside people are always looking for ways to be a step ahead. To grow as a company, we are looking at the trends. The churrascaria is really popular in the US and in Europe at the moment. It has proven popular on here. We are doing 80 to 90 people on a quiet night."

The line is also constantly looking for new ways to use its existing dining venues. As a result, Gem now offers guests the opportunity to dine with the ship's officers. "We have the most high profile officers of any [cruise] company - - I challenge anyone on that. It is funny, we did the officers Q&A today and I knew all the guests. When I worked for another cruise company, you didn't know [the guests] at the end of the cruise. The company didn't encourage that sort of interaction."

"If we can put the captain, the staff captain, the chief engineer and the two hotel directors anywhere on the ship, it creates a buzz around them. You can't believe the number of people that want to sit near us. People will come from other tables and say 'Can I get a photo

with you?"

While informal get-togethers where officers dine with guests whom they know have been around for several years, Norwegian has now introduced an event where any guest can sign up to have dinner with one of Gem's senior officers. "We just haven't got enough officers. We have hundreds of people signing up. So we [have] a lottery draw."

The dinners are held one evening each cruise in the Grand Pacific Dining Room. Guests can enter by leaving their name at the Guest Services Desk.

"We have also just introduced a chef's table. It is run in the dining area. It is a table of 10 to 20 people. It is several different courses with the wines. We are just introducing that now".



Hotel Director Steve Knott

Entertainment

With the launch of the line's latest ship, Norwegian Epic, Norwegian has also established a reputation for offering numerous entertainment options. "We tried it on Epic and we are expanding it to the fleet. We are really expanding the entertainment."

One new program that has recently come to the Gem is a version of the popular television game show "Deal or No Deal," in which guests can play along with the on-stage contestant through the use of digital handheld devices. "Our guests were saying we want more things to participate in. People love game shows. So we introduced the game and of course, the game comes with the chance to make money. People love it, they can't get enough of it."

Another new program is cabaret shows in the Spinnaker Lounge performed by the ship's production cast. "We have a wide variety of guests. We have people who are 90 and people who are two years of age. [With regard to the more senior segment], our entertainment department from shoreside said "what was that age group into when they were younger?" They were into cabaret. Our cast loves it. They do the [large production] shows but that is not what they are necessarily trained for. They are trained to be entertainers and singers. They have embraced it and our guests have really embraced it. We also have our cast teaching ballroom dancing."

Along the same lines, the members of the cruise staff are being asked to utilize their talents in new ways. "When we are hiring now within the cruise department - - we don't call it a cruise department anymore, it is an entertainment department - - we are asking what skills does that person have? You come in and you may be great with guests but it is also what else do you have to offer? We have people who can juggle. [Our cruise director sings]. All these things are just enhancing the guest experience."

Similarly, the ship's musicians have to be versatile. "Our show band, they now play in all the dining rooms. When we hire them we say they [also] can be a jazz quartet or they can be intermissionists."

Gem now also features two pop groups, a Caribbean band called Caribbean Vibes and a British band called Ocean Vibes. The latter plays popular music including Beatles and Elvis tributes. "The steel drum is great, I love it, but it is not enough anymore. People go down to the Caribbean and they want the steel band but they also want all the other types of music as well. So our bands can play country and western, rock and roll, everything from Jethro Tull to Tina Turner to Lady Gaga."

Children

Gem has implemented a new children's pro-