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BUCKET LIST ADVENTURE

**Un-cruise for a personalized voyage adventure**

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By Kathy Witt - KathyWitt.com

Lots of cruise lines tell you what they're all about: Carnival, the Fun Ships; American Cruise Line, Small Ship Cruising Done Perfectly; Holland America Line, A Signature of Excellence.

Un-Cruise tells you what they aren't: They aren't noisy, rushed, crowded or pretension, and they don't compromise in the dedication department, seriously subscribing to "Leave No Trace" practices. Un-Cruise tells you what they aren't, and what they aren't is like the other guys.

**Related Gallery**

Un-cruise for a personalized voyage adventure

Frankie and Bert Daniel of Spring Hope, N.C., boarded the S.S. Legacy in the fall of 2013 for Un-Cruise's Legends of Discovery voyage on the Columbia and Snake Rivers.

"We had never been on a 'small ship' cruise before," said Frankie Daniel. "We were blown away by the attention that was given to each passenger; the attention to detail was unbelievable. We had been on

several cruises before but nothing compares to Un-Cruise.”

Un-Cruise vessels aren't built to carry thousands of pleasure seekers, but just a couple to several dozen on a quest for a very personalized cruise experience, whether that's whale watching in Alaska's Icy Strait, navigating the arroyos of Mexico's Sea of Cortés by burro or exploring two UNESCO World Heritage Sites — the Galápagos Islands and Quito's Colonial city center — without getting lost in a throng of jostling elbows.

The itineraries are more flexible, the paths much less beaten. If, for example, there are more dolphins and whales to be seen further up the coast of Maui on the Hawaiian Seascapes adventure, that is where the captain goes. Such detours for the sake of spotting superb marine life are very Un-Cruise. On the Uncharted Isthmus excursion, passengers on the 64-guest Safari Voyager go in search of sloths and howler monkeys as they transit the nearly 50-mile-long Panama Canal.

Un-Cruise ships are the boutique vessels of the cruise world. They aren't built with casinos, arcades and massive showrooms, and the salon and spa are noticeably absent. Their stock in trade is understated elegance. A salon or lounge with comfy seating sets the mood for both pre-dinner cocktail parties and onboard programming. A cabin transformed into a massage room is a calming retreat and the place where the knots in your shoulders, earned from a day's canoeing or kayaking or swimming off the back of the ship, can be worked out.

The Un-Cruise fleet includes expedition vessels, yachts and one replica coastal steamer — the S.S. Legacy — which features period decor and Old World charm. Reflecting the personalized attention to detail, vessels have a variety of amenities: an EZ Dock launch platform or full-beam swim step; bow-mounted underwater camera; on-deck hot tub, sauna and fitness equipment or a fitness room; one or two massage rooms; library; fully stocked bar as well as wine taps.

Most of the vessels carry adventure equipment onboard, including inflatable skiffs, kayaks and stand-up paddle boards, as well as gear you'll need for appreciating the marine life, such as snorkel gear and wetsuits. Yoga mats are also available — as are sunrise yoga and stretch classes.

“The activities and the history are awesome, said Daniel. “And I was pleasantly surprised at the demographics onboard — all ages.”

You won't need to stake out a deck chair before sunrise. With such a small group, seating on the Sun Deck or in the Sun Lounge is plentiful, with cushioned couches and chaises offering shade and a place to lounge while watching the unfolding scenery. You won't amass a drink tab that equals a week's pay, either. Fine spirits, wines and microbrews are included in the fare with Un-Cruise on all but three vessels.

You won't find poolside hairy chest contests, pirate-themed dress-up deck parties or buffets with queues snaking into the hall. Rather, you'll find an incredibly unassuming and relaxing ambience, with a generous bar, open seating at meal times to get acquainted with all your cruise mates and a Wine Library (or other intimate lounge) for reading, playing games — even playing the piano.

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## ADVENTURE GUIDE TO DON'T-MISS MOMENTS

—In Hawaii, talk story with Anakala Pilipo Solatorio, the kapuna (eldest) of the native Hawaiians still living in Halawa Valley, and make poi with his son, Greg Solatorio; take a skiff out for sunrise whale watching; and enjoy a traditional hula dance and live Hawaiian music at the Molokai Museum during a pa'ina (feast).

— On the Columbia and Snake Rivers, ride a jet boat right into Hells Canyon; climb the switchbacks at the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area for an up-close view of Multnomah Falls; and be completely enchanted by the Theatre de la Mode exhibition of post-World War II French fashion mannequins at the

Maryhill Museum.

—In Mexico, on Sea of Cortés sailings, snorkel with sea lion pups; see the red rock cliffs of Ensenada Grande, whose beach is among the world's top beaches; and take a burro ride with local rancheros to explore the arroyos.

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Author, travel and lifestyle writer, and travel goods expert Kathy Witt feels you should never get to the end of your bucket list; there's just too much to see and do in the world. She can be reached at [KathyWitt24@gmail.com](mailto:KathyWitt24@gmail.com) or [KathyWitt.com](http://KathyWitt.com).

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## ADVENTURE GEAR TO TAKE ALONG

If you haven't updated your cosmetic kit lately, baggallini ([www.baggallini.com](http://www.baggallini.com)) has a lightweight cosmetic bag (\$55) in wipe-clean, water-resistant nylon that is stylish, structured and space-saving. Especially well-suited to tight spaces — like your cruise ship cabin — the kit can be hung by its hook to keep clear premium real estate on the bathroom vanity. You'll also be able to see and locate all your cosmetics.

Measuring 10.5 inches wide by 8.5 inches high by 4 inches deep, the bag neatly stores shampoo, conditioner, body wash and other toiletries in four individual clear pockets and a roomy clear zipper pocket. Tuck toiletry accessories like your toothbrush, tweezers and makeup brushes into eight elastic loops. An exterior zip pocket offers additional storage for other grooming supplies and accessories. Eight different solid and patterned colors, including lilac, aquamarine and red, are available.

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## PLAN YOUR ADVENTURE

Un-Cruise Adventures has a fleet of boutique yachts and small ships offering adventure excursions for 22 to 88 in Alaska, the Hawaiian Islands, Mexico's Sea of Cortés, Columbia and Snake Rivers, the Pacific Northwest, Galápagos Islands and Costa Rica and Panama.

Included in the cruise fare are gourmet meals featuring local flavors; guided tours geared toward small groups; from-yacht activities and equipment; and transfers. On select vessels, premium spirits, fine wines and microbrews, port charges and taxes, and a massage are also included.

Reservations and information: [www.Un-Cruise.com](http://www.Un-Cruise.com), 888-862-8881 888-862-8881 FREE FREE.

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