Nishith Saxena

Princess Cruises

blends classic elegance with modern touch

One of the best-known names in cruising, Princess Cruises has successfully sailed 18 years in India travel industry. Come aboard Princess Cruises ship and encounter an exquisite experience which is just not limited to a great location but also offers unique experiences. Nishith Saxena, Founder & Director, Cruise Professionals gives a sneak peek into this magnificent cruise line.

Bharti Sharma

Q Known for big ships, in what ways Princess Cruises intends to offer an exquisite experience to its cruisers?

A A welcoming ambience and innovative offerings create the perfect way to see the world with Princess Cruises. From the moment you step aboard, we want you to feel welcomed and right at home. And with the attentive service from a friendly staff that knows what hospitality means, you'll find your Princess ship truly to be home away from home. Dining on board a Princess cruise ship is a joyful celebration and our specialty restaurants always deliver an extraordinary experience. They are among the best at sea – or anywhere. We serve dishes made with the freshest ingredients, and our menus reflect flavours from around the world. You'll find our specialty restaurants are the perfect place to celebrate any occasion.

Apart from wonderful experiences, it also proffers great service, gracious hosts, mouth-watering cuisine, rare-label wines and unparalleled attention to detail. In a big ship, our guests don't feel lost, they find new like-minded friends who are out there to live life to the fullest in luxury.

Q What are the new developments aboard your ships which other cruise companies can't boast off?

A Princess Cruises has always been in the forefront of the using technology to the advantage of enhancing customer experience. Many years ago, when Princess started the concept of Personal Choice Dining, it revolutionised the way guest would dine on ships. When Princess unveiled Cruise Personaliser, it gave the guest total control of their bookings and a facility to pre-book shore excursions and other services was the icing on the cake.

In 2017 Princess Cruises announced a totally unheard of use of technology to enhance customer experience before, during and after the cruise–Ocean Medallion as it is popularly known, gives cruise personnel access to your choices and preferences as set by you in advance. Imagine you walk into a restaurant of your ship and you are greeted with your name, your table is already set with the food and beverages you like and you are all set for a delightful evening. That's the kind of personalisation our Ocean Medallion offers. Available on most of the large ships of Princess Cruises, this first-of-its-kind wearable device elevates every moment before, during and after your Ocean Medallion Vacation. From on-demand food and drinks, interactive gaming, custom entertainment and smart navigation, Medallion makes cruising simpler, and more personal and enjoyable than ever. Medallion holds the passenger's unique digital identity and communicates with thousands of readers onboard and in port. With no on-off switch, menu or charging needs, it helps you seamlessly discover everything around you. In addition to using Medallion for payments, unlocking your stateroom door and speeding up embarkation, it lets the crew see information they can use to serve you better.

Q What are the new itineraries in store for 2018-19 that should appeal the Indian cruise enthusiasts?

A The 2018-19 cruise season will set new standards in terms of enticing itineraries designed to show passengers unfamiliar destinations and fresh ways to experience the world's great oceans and rivers. Whether you want to drink mojitos and dance the salsa in the Caribbean, see a tribal dance group on a remote Papua New Guinea island or watch the northern lights dance in the Norwegian night sky, there's a voyage for you. Princess Cruises would take you everywhere. There are many enhancements in our cruise and cruise tour itineraries in Alaska, Australia, Baltic, Europe, Japan, Mediterranean, Norwegian Fjords, South America, Singapore and many more.

Q How do you plan to educate and assist tour operators and agents to sell the right packages of cruise to their customers?

A The buying process for cruises is going through a rapid change – initially, passengers would seek the assistance of the travel agent in ascertaining which is the best cruise for their vacation, but now almost 70 per cent passengers do their research already before they arrive at the agencies doorsteps. From being

an influencer, the agency's role is gradually becoming that of a facilitator. While there is no way to reverse or change this buying behavior due to access of technology and internet, what we are aiming at doing is to become the best and the quickest reference point when it comes to agents providing information to their clients. Since there are so many destinations and ports of call involved, it is important that agent facing the client has access to enough and more knowledge about the destination and activities about the same. We have redesigned our website keeping in mind this buying process and agents could use this as one of the more efficient tools in their sales process. By accessing our website www.cruiseprofessionals.in at any time of the day, the agency gets immense information about the destination, weather, site-seeing and shore-excursion options etc which would help the agent win-over the client.

The agencies need to be proactive in terms of educating themselves otherwise they would continue to get marginalised in this fast changing buyer's world.

Q India has been your long time market and growing. What potential do you still find in this diverse market? Besides leisure, are you experimenting with the Indian MICE segment?

A There is no doubt that after 18 years of Princess Cruises' presence in India, there is no aspect of this diverse market which remains untouched. While the family groups and FIT remain our strength, there are many small and mid-sized MICE groups which we have handled in the last decade. We have passed the experimental stage and are already catering to specific groups where the corporates want to incentivise their dealers, distributors or their high performers by experiencing a Princess Cruise and revel in the best luxury and service a cruise line could offer. Needless to say, the cruise ships are not built like hotels having separate banquet spaces. Therefore, MICE passenger's entire experience must be built around inclusive services offered onboard so that he/she feels like the part of the big cruisers family onboard rather than moving around with the same group of people with whom they interact back-home.

Q What's the next big thing scheduled by Princess Cruises? We have heard of expansion plans, tell us about it?

A We are extremely happy to share the news that Princess Cruises has recently ordered two new ships – now, Princess has newbuilds arriving in 2019, 2020, 2022, 2023, and 2025. This is great news for everyone at Princess Cruises and her fans across the world. This also means that our business is strong and our industry is thriving.

The new addition named Sky Princess debuting in 2019 would feature cabins that can accommodate up to five people — a first for the line. To be called Sky Suites, the rooms will be the largest accommodations on Sky Princess and offer 270-degree views from the top of the vessel. Sky Princess would also offer the largest balconies in the Princess fleet and come with special amenities including the best of the incredible features found on sister ships Regal Princess, Royal Princess and Majestic Princess from the relaxing Sanctuary to the expansive three-deck Atrium to some of our newest dining venues with updated décor and design throughout the ship.

Q According to you, why a cruising vacation rather than a conventional one?

A All cruises and cruise lines are different, but they all offer a convenience that is unmatched by any other type of vacation. Once you pick a cruise that offers the destinations you desire, you literally just have to pack and show up. The rest of the details are taken care of for you. Since cruises typically stop at more than one destinations, they provide families, couples or singles with the perfect opportunity to visit more than one place. And since land-based vacations typically require you to settle on one destination, cruises offer one more option for vacationers who have trouble picking just one place to go. And, with meals and entertainment included and a low fare, isn't it just the cherry on the cake?

Rail Europe-Inspiring authentic travel experiences

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With a comprehensive approach towards providing specialised services and attention to detail, Rail Europe caters to provide meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibition trips to its travellers. It promises to deliver exclusive quality services to suit every traveller's requirements.

Travellers today are looking for authentic travel experiences, and rail travel in Europe certainly answers that call. Its vast assortment of products and services include- high speed train tickets, reservations for day and overnight trains, scenic trains, luggage handling and on-board catering.

Choosing rail as a transportation option allows clients to travel like the locals and embrace the culture around them, instead of just sitting on a bus or a low cost airline. Travelling by high speed train offers a unique experience. Therefore, travelling by train in Europe is the highlight of the trip, rather than a mere mode of transportation. While travelling by a train, clients can enjoy a comfortable ride, taking in the scenery of majestic mountains, tranquil lake side villages and peaceful farmland pastures.

Rail Europe works closely with its European rail carrier partners to deliver the best possible experience with maximum amount of benefits thereby tailoring to every specific group requirements. Its Group Department offers personalised services to meeting and incentive planners. Considering the nature of group travel, clients can work with one of the highly experienced group consultants who are well trained in handling the travellers' requirements from start to finish. They believe in building strong relationships with clients, thereby being able to provide better services and a memorable travel experience.

Rail Europe arranges travel for all groups, big and small, including corporate incentives, pre- and post-cruise excursions, study abroad programs, faith-based travel, performing arts, social and sports events.

One can simply connect with their seasoned group travel experts on mice@raileurope.com to plan your Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) events.

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