

# Travel Metro

Edited by Lisa Scott [travel@ukmetro.co.uk](mailto:travel@ukmetro.co.uk)

# Sail away from the ash cloud

**Plan sea:** If you don't want to run the risk of having your holiday plans ruined by Icelandic volcanoes or British Airways strikes, why not try a cruise from Greenwich, Dover or Southampton? **BY DAVE MONK**

**A new wave: The £500million Celebrity Eclipse, which rescued British tourists from Spain, sails from Southampton**  
Picture: PA



## Short breaks

If you've never sailed – or even thought of sailing – before, and think cruise ships are full of greying old majors playing shuffleboard, try one of the new generation of vessels packed with facilities such as surf machines and abseiling walls. As well as escaping the misery of long waits at airports, passengers can pack much more baggage, not worry about rules on carrying liquids, and relax in their cabin as soon as they have boarded. Most ships have a

selection of restaurants and bars, a high ratio of private balconies, lots to do for children and a busy schedule of interesting ports.

Why not start off on a four-night trip from Southampton to Cork on August 28 on one of the world's biggest ships, Independence Of The Seas? The 15-deck Royal Caribbean giant is great for all the family with a surf machine, children's water park, American diner, video arcade, programme

for youngsters, a spa, ice-skating rink, rock-climbing wall, basketball and volleyball courts and miniature golf course. Cost: £514 a person

For a longer break, P&O's new £380million ship Azura is doing a seven-night trip on July 16 from Southampton to Dublin, Cork, Bilbao and Brest, for £589. The ship has five pools, an outdoor cinema, bungee trampolines, an Atul Kochhar restaurant and wines by Olly Smith.

## Mediterranean

You can travel as far as Italy on a two-week trip, taking in history and culture as well as beaches. From Southampton you have a couple of days at sea. Bay of Biscay and entrance to the Med can be choppy but hardly noticeable on a bigger ship. Bear in mind as well that destinations such as Rome and Florence are a long coach trip from the port. Celebrity Cruises have a 14-night Spanish Mediterranean cruise on board their new ship Eclipse (see panel at foot of page), which launched in Southampton only last month, from £1,721. Stops on the August 7 trip include Lisbon, Gibraltar, Barcelona, Provence, Mallorca and Cadiz. The upmarket ship, aimed at the sophisticated adult market, has a real grass lawn on deck and a glass-blowing show as well as 18 bars and restaurants.

## Iceland and Norway

After being named in Greenwich by Twiggy on June 4, the 450-passenger superyacht Seabourn Sojourn leaves on its maiden voyage on June 6. Destinations on the 14-night 'Northern Star Sojourn' cruise include Scotland, Denmark, Iceland – you might even get to see the volcano – the Norwegian Sea, Norway and the Netherlands. The voyage ends on June 20 in Dover. Price of £4,299 includes alcohol.

## Baltics

Head for eastern Europe out of Dover. NCL has a 12-night cruise including Copenhagen, Berlin, Tallinn, St Petersburg and Helsinki for £1,209 sailing in June, July, August and September. The ship, Norwegian Sun, offers 12 dining options from tapas to Teppanyaki, from American steaks to gourmet French food. The Freestyle concept means there are no set dining times and relaxed dining codes.

## Transatlantic

One for the veteran cruisers. If you enjoy long days at sea, there's still a chance to join the maiden voyage of NCL's new megaship Epic which has an ice bar, abseiling performances by the Blue Man group. The ship will leave Southampton on June 24, arriving in New York on July 1. The price of £1,022 includes economy return flight to London.



■ All prices are based on two people sharing, normally in an inside room, and include food and entertainment. Check with the cruise lines or travel agents for details.

## A fun way with food

Fancy sushi lollipops, lobster escargot or popcorn fish and chips? Try out the new Qsine restaurant on Celebrity Eclipse – the ship that rescued more than 2,000 Britons stranded last time by the ash cloud in Spain. First

thing you notice? The menu is on an iPad. Restaurant creator Jacques Van Staden invites guests to 'awaken your inner child' so your table can be served juicy beef patties and all the trimmings to create your own burgers. Disco

shrimp is a prawn cocktail served above ice cubes with a flashing blue light. Spring rolls are served, er, in springs. And at the end you can create your own cupcakes. Says Van Staden: 'We are a fun factory.'

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