



EXTRAORDINARY  
EXPERIENCES

OMAN • NEW ZEALAND • EASTER ISLAND

# MOONSTRUCK

When cruising on board Silversea's new *Silver Moon*, the ship itself becomes a destination just as much as the voyage to the Caribbean and Central America.

BY TOBY SALTZMAN

When the last gates of the Miraflores lock opened, allowing *Silver Moon* to glide out to the Atlantic Ocean, passengers of Silversea's newest vessel lined the upper deck and cheered. We had risen early that morning, thrilled to transit the historic Panama Canal, one of the world's iconic passages.

We had seen the ship's bow navigate into the narrow first lane of the Gatun Locks and watched as the steady mechanics of three successive locks slowly raised the ship 26 metres above sea level to the manmade Gatun Lake. While the *Silver Moon* slipped through the continental divide, we had lunch and cooled off in the pool.

Lingering on deck, my mind floated in dreamy reverie. By now, I'd come to love life in my own slow lane onboard *Silver Moon*, which had just launched in 2021. In anticipation of the nine days of sunny sailing from Fort Lauderdale to Panama City, I thought of the ship as a destination itself. As I watched waves curl into little whitecaps, I thought about how *Silver Moon* was already exceeding my expectations.

My enchantment with the ship started when I entered my deluxe veranda suite to find my living area set with chilled Laurent-Perrier Champagne, orchids, fresh fruit and truffle almonds. Then, my butler appeared – every suite has one – to point out a minibar stocked with wines and spirits, a Bvlgari clutch bag with masks and hand sanitizer, and a marble bathroom stocked with Bvlgari amenities. I felt confident a delightful sailing was ahead.

From dinner that first night, I got the impression that every evening would feel like a special occasion. In Atlantide, the silky king scallop and enoki mushroom soup and Chilean sea bass set a very high standard that continued as I dined my way through all the restaurants onboard. My taste buds exploded over the French cuisine served at La Dame – foie gras with white port marinade, glazed breast of Périgord duck and Grand Marnier soufflé. The restaurant itself, clad with wall panels of Lalique crystal, is likely the most exquisite at sea.

The first morning at sea, I attended a seminar conducted by Latin American food expert Nicholas Gill. He presented a culinary anthropology for the countries on our itinerary and talked about the importance of quinoa and amaranth seeds over centuries to indigenous people. As I sampled local delicacies and wines, I felt more connected to their history and culture. This was my first taste of S.A.L.T. (an acronym for Sea and Land Taste), an



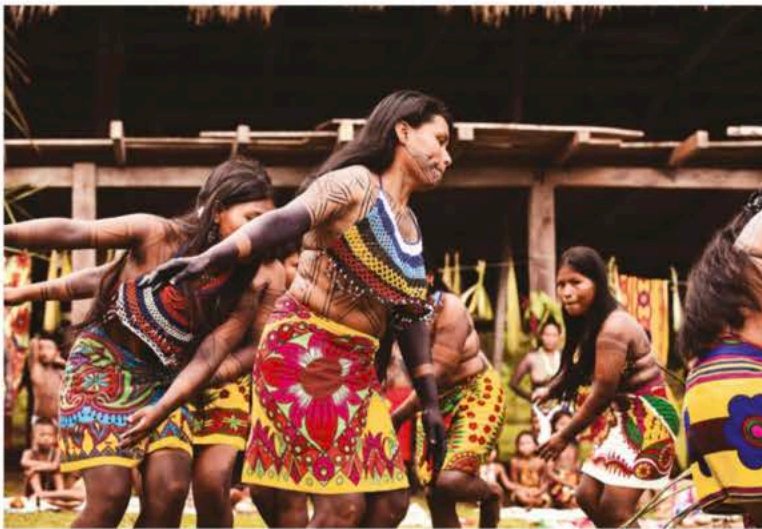
Clockwise from top left:  
Enjoying immersive  
tastings on board;  
Expertly crafted cocktail  
made with local spirits  
© Lucia Griggi, *Silver Moon*



“WITH ALL THE ELEMENTS OF S.A.L.T., WE AIM TO ENGAGE GUESTS BY CREATING A HUB FOR CULINARY EXPLORATION THAT WOULD INVOLVE REGIONAL AND LOCAL GUEST EXPERTS TO CREATE A CONNECTION WITH PLACES ON THE ITINERARY.”

innovative Silversea’s program launched on the *Silver Moon*. (It rolls out to the *Silver Dawn* this spring.) It became a highlight of my voyage.

S.A.L.T. was created in collaboration with Adam Sachs, an award-winning food writer and former editor of *Saveur* magazine. Its goal is to cultivate a deep understanding of the culture and gastronomy of local destinations through hands-on learning, seminars, eating and tasting. As we sail toward Mexico, I ask Sachs, now director of S.A.L.T., for his inspiration.



From top to bottom:  
Traditional dance  
performance in Panama;  
Adam Sachs, former  
editor-in-chief of *Saveur*  
magazine, now curator  
of the S.A.L.T. program  
© Lucia Griggi

“Wherever I travelled, I followed food to its source, meeting food producers, chefs, winemakers and spirit distillers, always delving into the culture of a place through the lens of food and drink,” he says. “With all the elements of S.A.L.T., we aim to engage guests by creating a hub for culinary exploration that would involve regional and local guest experts to create a connection with places on the itinerary.”

That afternoon, I join other passengers for the first of several complimentary sessions in S.A.L.T. Lab, ready for hands-on cooking. Director Eva Mulligan taught guests the intricacies of crafting local dishes. En route to Cozumel, Mexico, I make flavourful tortitas croquettes, callaloo pepper stew and sweet Mexican Alegria candy, made with amaranth seeds that I learned about earlier. As we head to Roatán, Honduras, I cook Hudutu fish stew with creamed plantains and coconut, a savoury staple of the local Garifuna people.

One evening in S.A.L.T. Bar, I indulge in cocktails crafted with local spirits. Later, I dine in S.A.L.T. Kitchen. In this first, large-scale restaurant at sea dedicated to regional and local cuisine, chef Alex Bignotti oversees the daily changing menu. Some of my favourite offerings include Peruvian squash fritters with tomato salsa and tangy aji sauce and Honduran turnovers served with a radish-based chimol salsa.

Each dish brings me a bit closer to the regions I am sailing in. By the time we reached Roatan, I was more familiar with the culture of the Garifuna, descendants of indigenous Afro-Caribbeans who found refuge from slavery in Punta Gorda in 1797. A visit to their Honduran coastal village would bring together all I had learned so far about these remarkable people who were recognized by UNESCO for their ancestral language, music and dance.

After a hilly ride that morning, we boarded wooden skiffs to tour Garifuna fishing huts, perched on stilts in the water among dense mangrove marshes. In Punta Gorda, we sipped cool drinks in coconut shells as the Garifuna dancers performed, flashing their skirts high, kicking up heels and swivelling hips in the fertility dance of their ancestors. Later, as a local chef served up a hearty lunch of Hudutu fish stew and fresh yellowtail snapper, my fellow guests agreed that Silversea’s S.A.L.T. program had cultivated a deeper appreciation for the destination and inspired an authentic sense of place.

Life aboard *Silver Moon* was enriched by personal choices. While some passengers participated in daily S.A.L.T. cooking lessons, or attended lectures about the creation of the Panama Canal, others lounged leisurely on deck, sipping cold drinks under the hot sun. You had the ability to curate your own experience. I loved being able to plan my days as I wished.

On my final afternoon sailing on the *Silver Moon*, I tried to choose my favourite day of this journey. But I was moonstruck. They were all sublime. ☾

