

SILVERSEA

The New Meaning of Luxury



BREAKFAST AT THE TAIL OF SILVER SPIRIT

— *By Dooma Wendschuh*

THE INDEPENDENT, FAMILY-OWNED CRUISE LINE SILVERSEA TAKES YOU ON AN ADVENTURE THROUGH STUNNING DESTINATIONS, PROVIDING AN ULTIMATE VACATION OF LUXURY AND RELAXATION.

Kathia is the CEO of the publishing company for DTK MEN magazine. She's built a media empire over the past ten years, but it hasn't gotten any easier. Five years ago, I left the video game industry to enter the intensely competitive legal cannabis industry. I've put everything I had into a company that has since become successful, but had to sue my business partner and his co-conspirator following a coup. I'm now building my second rapidly-growing cannabis company while pursuing litigation on the first in a foreign country.

Kathia and I travel a lot, but never for vacation. On the rare occasion that we're in the same city, we discuss business strategies over rushed 30-minute dinners. Eighteen days aboard Silver Spirit, one of Silversea Cruises' ultra-premium luxury cruise ships, seemed impossible. So, we made a deal. We'd work on the plane to Rome. Then, we'd each work at least two hours every day on the ship. It was going to be our first vacation in years and we had an agenda.



NAPLES, ITALY

Luxury has a way of creeping up on you. The Silversea hotel in Rome was truly extraordinary, but I didn't notice much apart from the fact that it had Wi-Fi on the first night. I remarked that the guests were exceptionally well-dressed at breakfast the next morning. There were men with ascots and blazers, and women with Hermès scarves and Burberry coats. I assumed they were stylish Europeans preparing for a day of important meetings in Italy's capital. Never would I have imagined that they were to be our fellow passengers on Silver Spirit.

Silversea changed how I thought of luxury. The moment you enter your suite, a personal butler rings the bell to ask of your preference in beauty products. They tell you that food and drink is complimentary, but they don't mention that if you order the same beverage more than once, your butler will stock your fridge with it for the remainder of the voyage. Most nights are either black tie or formal, so your butler dry cleans and presses your tuxedo and suits and shines your shoes free of charge. I used to think luxury was about having everything you need. Now, I know it's about having all your needs met before you ever knew you needed it.

Following rapid consolidation at the end of the 20th century, nearly all of the world's cruise lines are now owned by a handful of giant travel industry or shipping conglomerates. Silversea is the largest independent cruise line in the world and one of only two family-owned cruise lines left standing. It's also the only family-owned luxury cruise line left in the world. Since the family in question is Italian, it shouldn't be a surprise that the atmosphere onboard is warm, familial, and one of constant

celebration. Nor should it be a surprise that the food is absolutely phenomenal.

Not having to report to a corporate conglomerate or post quarterly earning updates means the Silversea can do things that most other cruise lines can't afford to do. Adam Wright, the cruise director of Silver Spirit, told me there were exactly 360 crew members onboard. This allows for a level of service and a standard of luxury that you could never imagine on those 6,000-passenger ships that dominate the cruising industry today. The comparatively small size of the ship also means they can visit more interesting, off-the-beaten-path (and often more upscale) ports. Our eighteen-day adventure took us through the Mediterranean, to the Middle East, around the pirate-infested Gulf of Aden, and culminated in the opulence of Dubai. Silversea also offers cruises on all seven continents. Canadians can board Silversea ships in Montreal, Quebec City, or St. John's and cruise to exotic destinations such as Les Iles de la Madeleine, Greenland, Nunavut, Reykjavik Iceland, or even New York City, Boston, South Florida, and South Carolina.

Our first stop was Naples, Italy in the shadow of Mt. Vesuvius. While several passengers went to see the ruins of Pompeii, Kathia and I strolled along the streets and sampled the local cuisine. When the ship pulled in to Alexandria, Egypt, we journeyed to Saqqara to see the oldest pyramids ever built, the Great Pyramids, and the Sphinx of Giza. You couldn't help but be awestruck by the scope of human achievement from centuries ago.



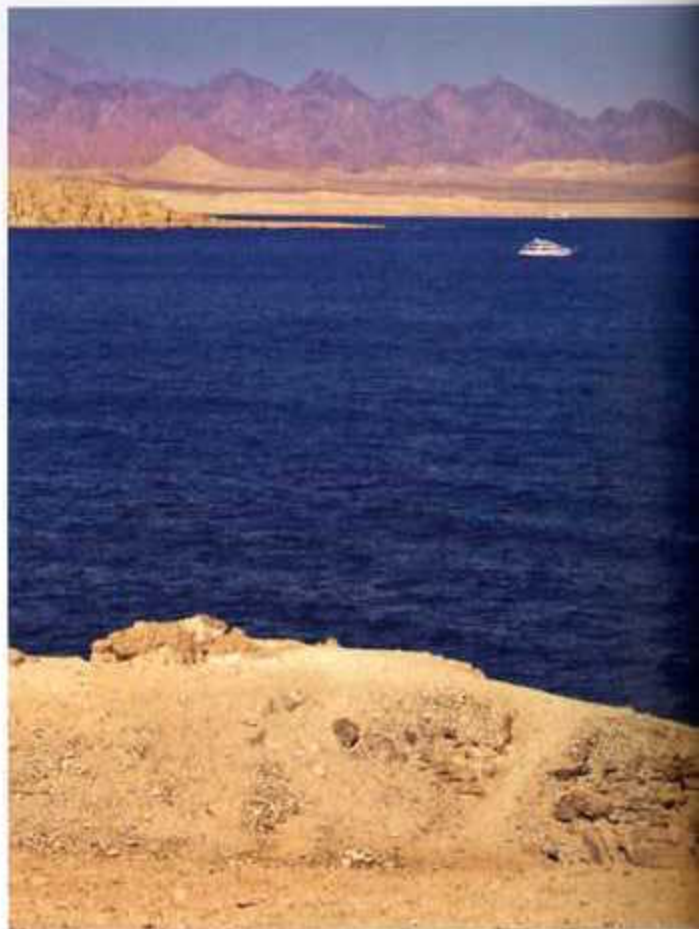
ALEXANDRIA, EGYPT

The next day was my birthday, and the Silver Spirit sailed slowly down the Suez Canal past lumbering cargo ships and vigilant guard booths. We clacked away on our keyboards, made a few phone calls with our respective offices, suntanned, and hit the gym before dinner at La Dame, a fine-dining French restaurant operated by Relais & Chateaux.

In Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, the ship's shore concierge arranged for Abdel, a private tour guide, to take Kathia and I to the Ras Mohamed National Park. We snorkeled in crystal clear waters, where the fish were as brightly coloured as the coral. We hiked to the tallest peak in the area, took amazing photos, and still had time for a late lunch at one of Abdel's favourite restaurants, shopping, and a visit to a café, where we sampled Egyptian coffee and took a few puffs from a towering apple-flavoured water pipe.

When the ship stopped in Safaga, Egypt, Kathia, and I visited Luxor, Karnak Temple, the Valley of the Kings, and the Valley of the Queens. We visited the tombs of Tutankhamen, Queen Nefertiti, and others, each resplendent with polychrome reliefs and narrow bridges over steep chasms (meant to trap grave robbers). It was eerily reminiscent of scenes from an Indiana Jones movie. We drank Egyptian beer and listened to stories of Isis Ra and Osiris as we cruised down the Nile at sunset.

Maybe it was the wine or the influence of the amazing passengers, but as the voyage went on, the dinners got longer and the calls to the office fewer and further between. We spent less time on our keyboards and more time in the pool. We still hit the gym every day, but the rest of our "agenda" had begun to seem less important. The gravitational pull of the ship was eclipsing the pull of our respective businesses.



CRUISING MUSCAT, OMAN

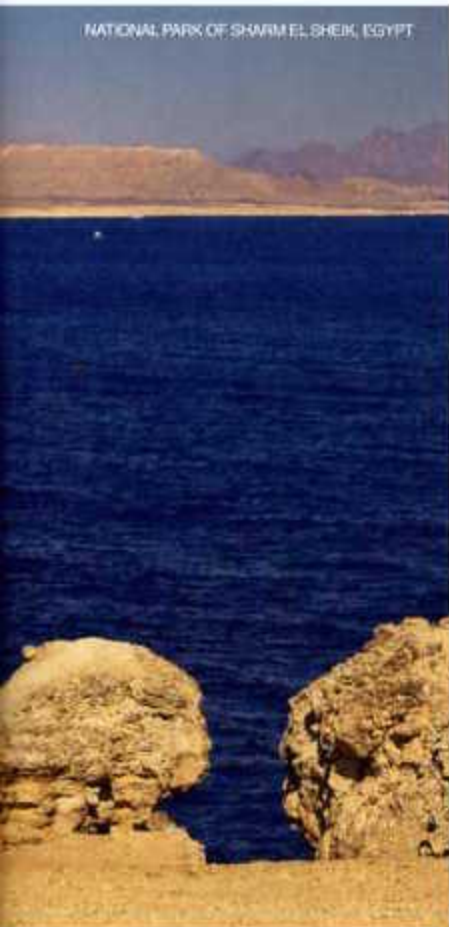


VIEW FROM THE CASTLE SANTELMO, NAPLES ITALY

FUJIFILM

Pictures by Doorn Wendschuh using Fujifilm XT2 Camera

NATIONAL PARK OF SHARM EL SHEIKH, EGYPT



THE NILE, EGYPT



GREAT SPHINX OF GIZA, EGYPT

On the fifteenth night of our voyage, the captain, crew, and passengers met on the open-air pool deck (which had been closed for the past two nights so as not to attract the attention of any lurking pirates) for a "pirate party" to celebrate our successful traversing of the Gulf of Aden. Guests were encouraged to "dress as pirates," and the costumes were hilarious. Somehow, during that evening, it felt like we knew everyone there even though there were 600 passengers. Everyone danced, even the captain!

In Salalah, Oman, there were camels everywhere. If you've ever wondered where the prize-racing camels come from – the ones that win million-dollar prizes at Al-Shahaniya and other camel races – now you know. We followed the Frankincense Trail past breathtaking vistas to a small market on the beach that had hundreds of shops, which all sold frankincense and frankincense burners.

The ship pulled into Muscat, Oman at sunrise. Amidst the towering mountains surrounding the city stands a frankincense burner so large it could probably burn tons of frankincense at once. We plied the waters of Muscat on a traditional wooden dhow with friends, drinking Omani coffee and eating local sweets. It was incredibly beautiful but bittersweet, because we knew the next stop – the towering splendor of Dubai – would be our last. When we returned to our suite that evening, I realized it had been almost a week since I'd opened my laptop.

I used to think of celebration as something you do when you succeed. You celebrate accomplishments, milestones, and major events in your life. After eighteen days aboard Silversea's Silver Spirit, I realized there's another way of looking at it. Celebrations don't have to be things that punctuate your life. Life itself is a celebration. The crew onboard, the people we met, the entire journey, everything was a celebration. Although Kathia and I are still working insanely long hours and are rarely together, now, whenever we see each other, we choose to celebrate.