



SilverSea's voyages in the Caribbean are a great way to experience luxury cruising. SILVERSEA CRUISES

Caribbean comfort aboard SilverSea

Luxury cruise line's voyages are cost-efficient, and a well-kept secret



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When I talk about luxury cruises, I usually pair it with some far-flung and exotic destination like Antarctica or the Mediterranean. Or, perhaps Asia and Australia. Today, however, I propose a new luxury cruising destination: the Caribbean, with SilverSea (cruise center/silversea).

This column isn't so much for the person booking an inside cabin on a weeklong Caribbean cruise for a steal of a deal. But if you are someone who routinely

cruises in a suite on a bigger ship, the truth is you can probably afford one of SilverSea's extremely cost-friendly voyages in the Caribbean — and upgrade every facet of your cruising experience in the process.

Earlier this year, I sailed aboard SilverSea's 608-guest Silver Spirit on a unique run from Fort Lauderdale, Fla., to San Juan. A 10-day voyage, it called on parts of the Caribbean that the big ships normally sail right on by. Places like the yacht-splashed paradise of Gustavia, St. Barths, where Silver Spirit looked right at home. But we also called on big-name ports, too, like Philipsburg, St. Maarten, and St. John's, Antigua.

Sailing aboard Silver Spirit in the Caribbean is akin to being part of a well-kept secret known only to a select few. Unlike the

other ships in port with us, there was never a lineup to get back on board our floating castles — which just underwent a massive lengthening and refurbishment project last year. Cold towels and complimentary bottled water were handed out at the gangway as a matter of course. Once on-board, a refreshing towel — and maybe a beverage or two — awaited.

Luxury cruising really hits its apex in the Caribbean when it comes to deck space. You've got to be a very early riser to get a spot by the pool on the big ships. Aboard Silver Spirit, no such competition exists: there's simply enough space for everyone at almost all times, whether you're a sun-seeker or, like me, a shade worshipper.

My very first SilverSea cruise was to the Caribbean almost a decade ago. My brief sojourn aboard Silver Spirit was my first return to the region on SilverSea, after nearly five voyages this past winter on other ships. I'd forgot-

ten how easy SilverSea makes everything — and how much value the line is able to pack into its Caribbean departures.

Many Caribbean voyages go for a fraction of the line's itineraries in other parts of the world, and that makes them great for newcomers who are curious about trying a luxury cruise that won't break the bank.

Things are moving right along at SilverSea, too. The line has just announced it is building a new purpose-built luxury expedition ship, Silver Origin, that will be dedicated to the Galapagos Islands year-round. It will replace the pretty — but aging — Silver Galapagos, which will be retired when Silver Origin sets sail next summer. Of particular note is the new "Basecamp" space that will act as a lounge, information centre and social heartbeat of the ship.

That's still far in the future. For those who have never dabbled in the luxury cruise field before,

SilverSea's upcoming Caribbean season offers plenty of value. This winter between October and March, SilverSea is sending its Silver Shadow, Silver Whisper, Silver Wind, and expedition vessels Silver Cloud and Silver Explorer, to the Caribbean on a series of diverse itineraries.

I've got my eye on Silver Shadow's Jan. 7, 2020, departure from Barbados, which stops in Trinidad & Tobago; Grenada; Guadeloupe; Antigua; and Martinique, along with a call in Mayreau, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines — one of the most unspoiled places I've ever been to in the Caribbean. Happy cruising.

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