MEDITERRANEAN MOMENTS **THAT STAY WITH YOU**

The Greatest Luxury is the Freedom to Explore

There are holidays you remember for the places you visited, and then there are journeys you remember for the way they made you feel. Our seven-night Mediterranean voyage aboard the Norwegian Epic® was firmly the latter.



Boarding in the city of Civitavecchia, we knew our cruise itinerary promised some of Europe's most celebrated destinations. What surprised us was how effortlessly the cruise blended iconic landmarks with simple pleasures: exceptional meals, attentive service and the freedom to discover each port on our own terms.

For seasoned travellers, that flexibility proved to be one of the voyage's greatest strengths. Rather than rushing from one organised excursion to another, we used the ship as a luxurious floating base while creating our own adventures ashore.

Before embarking, we spent time in Rome exploring some of the Eternal City's greatest treasures. A private guide led us through Vatican City, the Sistine Chapel and the magnificent Basilica of San Pietro in Vincoli, where Michelangelo's monumental Moses sculpture provided a memorable introduction to the week ahead. By the time we boarded the train to Civitavecchia the following morning, the holiday already felt wonderfully underway.

Once aboard, the Norwegian Epic® immediately impressed with its warm hospitality. From embarkation to disembarkation, every crew member we encountered was friendly, efficient and genuinely invested in ensuring guests enjoyed themselves. Small gestures made a lasting impression, whether it was remembering our favourite drinks or offering helpful advice before we went ashore.

Dining quickly became one of the highlights of every day. Norwegian Cruise Line® has earned an excellent reputation for culinary variety, and the Norwegian Epic® certainly lived up to it. Our first evening was spent at Le Bistro, the ship's elegant French speciality restaurant, where beautifully presented dishes and attentive service set the tone for the voyage.

Later in the week we enjoyed dinner at Cagney's Steakhouse, a meal my husband still talks about months afterwards. His perfectly cooked steak was, in his opinion, one of the finest he has ever eaten. Combined with the impressive selection available across the ship's complimentary restaurants and casual eateries, every



meal became something to anticipate.

Although the ship itself offers entertainment, pools, live performances and countless places to unwind, we spent most days ashore. With several organised excursions already fully booked before departure, we planned our own itineraries, and that decision turned out to be one of the best we made.

Salerno revealed the authentic rhythm of southern Italy through lively piazzas, historic streets and welcoming cafés. In Sicily, we travelled independently from Catania to the spectacular hilltop town of Taormina. Overlooking the sparkling Ionian Sea, its ancient Greek theatre and flower-filled lanes created one of the most picturesque days of the cruise.

Our only full day at sea provided a welcome change of pace. Instead of sightseeing, we settled into loungers beside the adults-only pool, joined onboard quizzes and spent leisurely



hours chatting with fellow travellers. It was the perfect opportunity to appreciate the ship itself, allowing us to recharge before the remaining ports.

The French Riviera produced one of the voyage's most unexpected highlights. After tendering into Villefranche-sur-Mer, we boarded a local train to Menton, a town that instantly captured our hearts. Pastel-coloured buildings tumbled down towards the waterfront, palm-lined promenades overlooked the Mediterranean and the relaxed atmosphere encouraged us to linger far longer than planned. It remains one of those rare destinations that immediately inspires thoughts of returning.

Marseille offered a completely different perspective. From the heights of the Basilique Notre-Dame de la Garde, sweeping views stretched across the harbour to the famous Château d'If, forever immortalised in The Count of Monte Cristo. It was a reminder that the Mediterranean is as rich in stories as it is in scenery.

ENDING ON A HIGH NOTE

The cruise concluded in Barcelona, but not before one final masterpiece. An early guided visit to Antoni Gaudí's extraordinary Sagrada Família provided a fitting finale. Sunlight filtering through towering stained-glass windows transformed the vast interior into a kaleidoscope of colour, creating an atmosphere that was both inspiring and deeply moving.

Looking back, it wasn't simply the destinations that made this voyage memorable. It was the balance between exploration and relaxation, outstanding dining and consistently thoughtful service. Having the confidence to design our own days ashore gave every port a more personal feel, while returning each evening to the comfort of the Norwegian Epic made every destination even more enjoyable.

The Mediterranean never disappoints, but experiencing it this way added another dimension entirely. We returned with thousands of photographs, countless memories and more than a few favourite meals to reminisce about. For travellers seeking the perfect combination of independence, comfort and world-class hospitality, the Norwegian Epic delivers a voyage that lingers long after the final port has disappeared from view.





free at sea adds extra value

For South African travellers, Norwegian Cruise Line's Free at Sea™ package can significantly enhance the overall cruise experience. Depending on the booking, it typically includes unlimited premium beverages, speciality dining, high-speed Wi-Fi and shore-excursion credits, helping to reduce onboard expenses while adding flexibility throughout the voyage.

By including many of the extras that guests would normally purchase separately, the package offers excellent value. It allows travellers to budget more confidently before departure, making it an attractive option for anyone planning a Mediterranean escape.

www.ncl.com/uk/en/travel-blog/everything-to-know-about-free-at-sea