

ALL ABOARD!



Meetings at Sea

An exciting alternative to a land-based meeting by Nancy Crook

In the constant search for original venues and memorable experiences, meeting planners must continually think outside the box. That box has expanded from traditional hotels, to conference centers, to retreats and resorts, and the next step is to send that box out to sea! Many of the world's cruise lines have begun to embrace the meetings market and have created dedicated meeting space aboard their newer ships.

Taking your meeting out to sea provides a memorable experience for all your attendees. There is a perceived luxury to cruises; attendees feel pampered and special. Meetings at Sea work for many types of meetings, from sales incentive and customer appreciation trips to board meetings and strategic planning. Similar to the conference center's Complete Meeting Package, cruise ships offer the simplicity of an all-inclusive price. Cruise ship pricing includes: accommodations, meals, room service, entertainment, health club facilities and classes, meeting facilities and standard audio visual, and may even include airfare and transfers.

While a cruise meeting provides an exciting alternative to a land-based meeting, there are many factors for meeting planners to familiarize themselves with. One must consider "what is the right ship for my meeting?", "Will this cost more than a land-based resort?", "What are the tax laws associated with cruise meetings?" and "Where do I go to get started?"



What is the right ship for my meeting?

The factors to consider when deciding on the right ship for your meeting are: What is the level of attendee? Where do we want to go? How long a cruise do we want to take? Do we need to be the only group on the ship? What is my budget? The answers to

these questions will help you decide what size ship and what cruise line is right for your meeting.

Will this cost more than a land-based resort?

The all inclusive pricing of a cruise ship has similar appeal to the CMP packages of conference centers. The structure of the pricing includes many items that, if you paid a la carte you'd probably end up spending more per person than the cost of a cruise meeting. Therefore, if the goal is to create the same experience you'd have at a land-based resort on a cruise ship, the ship just may end up being the more economical option!

What are the tax laws associated with cruise meetings?

There are several tax issues to look at when planning a meeting. Based on the destinations of the particular cruise you choose, you will pay a tax package on top of *(cont. next pg.)*



your cruise price. But there are also the tax write-off laws to consider. While each meeting planner will have to take into account their company and state tax regulations, a general rule is that unless the ship is registered in the US (and therefore paying US taxes) the meeting will be taxable. Some cruise ship companies are starting to inaugurate US flagged ships, and therefore helping companies skirt this tax issue.

Where do I get started?

Give us a call at EMCVenues or visit our website www.EMCVenues.com to start planning your cruise meeting.

We will help you find the right ship for your meeting and budget, and support you throughout the entire booking process. We continue to be the one stop shop for all your meeting needs! **MEET**



***Nancy Crook** joined EMCVenues as the Meeting Support and Resource Center Manager. Nancy works with accounts generated through the website and the 800 number. Nancy is also the cruise meeting specialist and works with all meetings booked on EMCVenues partner cruise lines. Nancy is a graduate of the Cornell University School of Hotel Administration. She has applied her talents as a*

Conference Planner and Sales Executive as well as a Financial Analyst for a Hospitality Investment Firm.