

## FOREWORD



The island-dotted Caribbean Sea is perfectly suited to a cruise vacation. Ever since the concept of cruising was pioneered in the 1960s, when jet planes became the main mode of transatlantic travel and shipping companies sought new roles for their ocean liners, the Caribbean has been the most popular cruising area in the world. The beauty of its beaches is legendary, and its turquoise waters remain warm year round – ideal conditions for swimming, snorkeling and other water sports.

The region is also rich in culture. The West Indies were once the most important colonial region in the world, their sugarcane plantations a lucrative source of wealth for Britain, France and other European powers. As a result, each island nation has its own history and local flavor – an exotic mix of Indian, African, European and Asian influences. The African influence is reflected in the rhythmic music and the bold use of color in everything from folk art to batik clothing to colonial architecture. West Indian homes boast crayon-colored shutters, and the local

fishermen paint their skiffs a combination of rainbow reds, yellows and blues, inspired no doubt by an aquamarine sea shimmering across the colorful corals and tropical fish.

Sailing vessels have long plied the Caribbean's warm waters, riding the constant trade winds that temper the region's heat and humidity. North Americans yearning to escape the gray grip of winter soon find their senses reawakened by the Caribbean's warm breezes, fragrant flowers and the carefree mode of travel that a cruise vacation provides. The ships usually pull into port as dawn is breaking, treating their passengers to the magic of a seaborne arrival as the golden pink sun rises above a rippled sea and the verdant shores of a volcanic island draw ever nearer. The departure is equally special, the ship easing away from shore and heading out to sea as the setting sun casts its Caribbean colors across the sky. For a vacation of relaxation and romance, nothing surpasses a cruise among these islands of endless summer.

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