

Attention, passengers: The sky's the limit

By Diane Bair and Pamela Wright

GLOBE CORRESPONDENTS

When it comes to cruising, there's bad adventure, like sinking, crashing, or being marooned on a ship without plumbing. And then there's good adventure, like kayaking, snorkeling, and skydiving. Happily, the good kind is far more prevalent.

Wait a minute — skydiving? That's right. Aboard Royal Caribbean's Quantum of the Seas (www.royalcaribbean.com), launching in November 2014, guests will go atop the ship, where a vertical wind tunnel will simulate the experience of skydiving — a first for a cruise line.

The 4,180-passenger vessel, sailing from New York, will also boast another feature that folks with vertigo will want to steer clear of: The North Star, a glass capsule modeled after the London Eye, that will lift passengers high in the air and over the ship, for a bird's-eye view of ship, sea, and ports of call.

THRILL RIDES AT SEA With more than 200 passenger vessels plying the world's rivers and seas, cruise lines get pretty creative when coming up with new and thrilling features. Royal Caribbean grabs headlines for being the first line to offer adventures at sea like a surf machine, a rock climbing wall (available on all of its 21 ships) and zip-lining (on its Oasis of the Seas and Allure of the Seas). The luxurious Seabourn line's ships (www.seabourn.com) go one better — they have a marina off the back of the vessel, so guests can sail, waterski, or kayak off the back of the ship. Factor in ice-skating rinks, banana boat rides, and running tracks — all found on cruise ships these days — and you may well feel like a total slug if all you want to do is lounge around the pool.

Of course, if you do hang out at the pool, there'll be plenty to see. The newest ships are looking more and more like water parks these days. Aboard the MSC Preziosa (www.msccruises.com), one of 12 vessels in the family-owned Italian cruise line that sails out of Miami, the longest single-rider water slide at sea whisks passengers through 394 feet of twists and turns above the deck. Not to be outdone, the new, 4,000-passenger Norwegian Breakaway (www.ncl.com) offers a mega-size water park and a Nickel-

odeon-themed Kids' Aqua Park (plus an Ice Bar for those who want to escape the waterpark scene). Does that sound too tame for your bunch? The new Carnival Sunshine (www.carnival.com) offers the Speedway Splash, a pair of side-by-side, 235-foot-long waterslides where guests race to the finish line.

RETRO FUN Sometimes what's old is new again. Princess Cruises (www.princess.com) offers a drive-in movie minus the cars on some ships, including the Royal Princess, a new class of ship launched this year by Kate Middleton, Duchess of Cambridge. Watching "Movies Under the Stars" on a Princess ship is pure retro fun: Guests sprawl out on padded lounge chairs with blankets, eat popcorn, and watch current movies on a giant screen.

And who among us doesn't love bumper cars? You'll find a modern version on Royal Caribbean's Quantum of the Seas (www.royalcaribbean.com). Bowling? You can do that at sea, too; the Norwegian Epic (www.ncl.com) has a bowling alley. And as much as kids love a water park, small fry will dry off in a hurry for the chance to bake cookies — which makes the kid's baking classes offered by Crystal Cruises (www.crystalcruises.com) popular.

SO THAT'S WHAT THEY MEAN BY 'SHIP-SHAPE' Bringing home a few extra pounds around the middle is an unwanted souvenir, so cruise lines have put a lot of weight behind gyms. Among the best — and definitely the biggest — is the 31,000-square-foot fitness center on the Norwegian Epic, where they offer Pilates, yoga, a weight room, and more. Most ships offer onboard fitness and yoga classes, but if you're really into the latter, check out the series of yoga-themed sailings aboard the Star Clippers' Star Flyer (www.starclippers.com). This four-masted sailing ship brings on a yoga specialist for these cruises, with all the class-



Bikers on board? This group on the new ship Norwegian Breakaway, launched in April, are pedaling water cycles. The 18-deck, 4,000-plus-passenger Breakaway also offers zip-lining (top), surfing, and sky diving — as cruise ships offer many activities once thought land-based.

es you'd expect at yoga camp, plus an array of fresh fruits and vegetables.

Speaking of healthy cooking, Canyon Ranch operates spas on ships on the Oceania Cruises (www.oceaniacruises.com) and Regent Seven Seas lines (www.rssc.com), as well as Cunard's Queen Mary 2 (www.cunard.com). They bring the famous Canyon Ranch cuisine — health-conscious gourmet food that tastes great — to the seas, an alternative to the buffet line. Of course, one of the best

ways to stay fit on a cruise is to explore when you're in port. Choose shore excursions that offer walking, hiking, kayaking, and other active modes of sightseeing and you won't worry about that serving of crème brûlée. European river cruise lines like AmaWaterways (www.amawaterways.com) and Uniworld (www.uniworld.com) offer free use of bicycles to guests who want to go off independently or on guided bike tours to discover local villages, while Scenic Cruises ([nictours.com\), a fast-growing luxury outfit based in Australia, keeps electric-assist bikes on board for touring. And you've got to love this one: the MSC Divina, making its North American debut in Miami this November, is the first cruise ship to offer Aqua Cycling at sea — basically, it's spinning, but the bike is underwater.](http://www.sce-</p>
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TAKE ME TO THE RIVER If you are one of those early adopter types, consider sailing on a brand-new river cruise line. Scenic Cruises just launched Emerald Waterways (www.emeraldwaterways.com). Debuting in April, the ships will sail four eight- to 15-day itineraries on the Danube, Rhine, and Moselle rivers. The Emerald Star and Sky vessels will each carry 182 guests in 72 suites and 20 staterooms. Priced to compete with lines such as Viking and Uniworld, fares will include all transfers to and from the ship, all gratuities, and at least one shore excursion almost every day. Brag-worthy feature: an onboard heated swimming pool with a retractable roof that transforms into a movie theater by night.

A newcomer to the US market (as of last year), the German line A-ROSA (www.arosacruises.com) is launching a new ship in 2014, the 89-cabin Flora. Focusing on the active traveler, A-ROSA's seven-to-11-night river trips cruise the Rhine, Rhone, and Danube rivers. Itineraries include castles, countryside, vineyards, and museums. Fares include gourmet dining, open bar throughout the ship, gratuities, and shore excursions.

Tempted to cruise, but still worried about those bad adventures? Take heart. "Cruising is an incredibly safe way to travel," says Carolyn Spencer Brown, editor in chief of www.cruisecritic.com.

"The safety of passengers is a top priority for cruise lines, and as the industry continues to grow and evolve, so do the safety measures put in place. As with any vacation — land, air, or sea — it's important to be aware of your surroundings and pay attention to safety protocols but, other than that, there's not much more to do other than enjoy your vacation."

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Bit of Kentucky life: weekly song, dance

By Dave Seminara

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

ROSINE, Ky. — The sound of a high, lonesome voice beckons me into the old barn. Michael Lindsey, 60, a building contractor, commands the attention of a few dozen locals who make the Rosine Barn Jamboree a weekly ritual in this town of 41 residents.

Before the first song of the night is complete, I learn that my pew-mates, Joe Eversole, 80, and Mildred Johnson, 72, are soon to be married after a whirlwind courtship that started over campground karaoke. Alvin Roof, who wears a mesh Grayson County Hillbilly hat, introduces himself as the barn opener. He unlocks the door at 4:30 p.m. every Friday.

A sign on the wall reads, "I Get High on Bluegrass." There's no alcohol in this dry county, but you can have a cup of instant coffee for a donation and a bag of popcorn for a buck.

Nell Ferguson, 74, whose parents, Edith and Everett Woosley, bought the barn in 1944, dances with Lincoln Midkoff, who moves gracefully but swears he's about to turn 90.

Midkoff has just two weekly rituals. Sundays he drives his 1929 Model A Ford to church,

and Friday nights he puts on his best pair of bib overalls and cowboy boots and hits the dance floor at the jamboree.

Nearly every Friday night for the last 20 years, bluegrass aficionados have gathered here in this tiny town where Bill Monroe (1911-96), considered the godfather of bluegrass, was born and raised. Monroe played his final gig at the barn and is buried around the corner. His spirit lives on at the jamboree, where admission is free and musicians are never paid.

Since 1944, the barn has functioned as a general store, a blacksmith shop, a Louisville Slugger workshop, and a bus depot, among other things, and it now has landmark status.

"This is not a money-making venture," says Ferguson between songs. "We come here to have a good time. We take up a collection to cover our light bill and water bill and the insurance, but that's it." Gwen Cagle, 82, a guitar player who says he went to elementary school with Dolly Parton, says, "Tonight it's just a bunch of us locals here. But we get people from all over. Everyone wants to play on the same stage Bill Monroe played on."

Earlier at the International Bluegrass Museum in nearby Owensboro, Chris Langdon set



PHOTOS BY DAVE SEMINARA FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

A jamboree is held every Friday night in Rosine, Ky., in a barn where Bill Monroe once played his bluegrass. Jarrod Carathers, 10, comes to play his fiddle.

me straight on what distinguishes bluegrass from old-time Appalachian and country music. "A big part of it is that high lonesome sound that defines bluegrass," he said. "It's that tight-throated, high-pitched, piercing male vocal."

The youngest of eight children, Monroe was born in Rosine, then a town of 166 people. He moved to East Chicago as a teenager in 1929 and found work in a barrelhouse. He played dances with his brother Charlie and by 1931 they were good enough to quit their day jobs. The brothers parted company in 1938; some say it was over a woman, but most have debunked that explanation.

Monroe went on to play with his band, the Blue Grass Boys, for 57 years and became one of just five musicians to be induct-

IF YOU GO . . .

What to do

Rosine Barn Jamboree

Friday nights March to mid-December, about 6-10 p.m.
Bill Monroe boyhood home
6210 Highway 62 East
Rosine, Ky.
270-274-9181

Where to stay

Beaver Dam Inn

1750 US Highway 231 South
Beaver Dam, Ky.
270-274-0851
www.beaverdaminn.magnusonhotels.com
A budget motel 10 miles from the barn, from \$73.

ed into the Rock and Roll, Country Music, and Nashville Songwriters halls of fame. His headstone reads: "Bill Monroe is Bluegrass Music!" The collection of musicians on stage grows and as they launch into a spirited instrumental number, the crowd floods onto the dance floor. The music is infectious, the dancers full of life.

During a break in the action I repair to Woosley's General Store next to the barn for a bite to eat and discover that there's music there too. A trio from nearby Henderson is warming up in front of the cash register and there's a jam session in the back of the room. The population may be 41, but there are at least that many musicians in town tonight.

Back at the barn, an ad hoc group is playing "Ashokan Farewell," a sweet, mournful tune made famous by Ken Burns in his Civil War documentary series. We listen to heartfelt ballads from a pair of female vocalists brandishing spiral notebooks with the lyrics written in them. John Probus, a retired drywall finisher whom I'd met that afternoon, greets me like an old friend.

"Here comes Big Foot," Probus says, nodding his head in the direction of a man wearing a camouflage shirt making his way toward the stage. "Wait until you hear his voice."

Darryl Madison takes the stage and his powerful, moving voice rattles the barn. Ferguson joins him for a stirring rendition of "Somebody Loves Me."

The show ends promptly at 10 p.m. and as we emerge into the cool, starry night I ask Michael Lindsey if the jam will still be around in 20 years.

"That's a really hard question to answer," he says. "We have a lot of young musicians around these parts, but most of them are trying to find gigs that pay. I hope it survives but I just don't know."

As I say goodbye to new friends, I realize that I've discovered the secret to longevity. The good folks of Rosine stay active and engaged. They take care of each other. And they sing and dance together every Friday night.

Dave Seminara can be reached at dave.seminara@gmail.com.



STRETCH YOUR WINGS. AND YOUR LEGS.

AIR ON THE SIDE OF HUMANITY WITH THE MOST LEGROOM IN COACH.

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