

A Solo Traveler's Experience on Norwegian Cruise Line

The first day of the cruise, the program listed a Solo Travelers Meet & Greet; we met up in one of the bars and I was surprised to see about 40 people ranging in age from mid 20's to 70+, both male and female. Some people were married but traveling without their spouse, some were single, divorced, widowed or just traveling by themselves for the same reason as me - wanting some peace and quiet from friends or family. The group was a great mix of personalities and past cruise experiences.

NCL has a position on their ship for Solo Traveler Host and our Host was Sharon Waugh from South Africa and she was simply amazing. She worked the entire cruise to ensure we were well taken care of and always had someone to hang out with, talk to, etc. After meeting up in the bar for the first meet and greet, the group progressed to the Studio Lounge area (which is located in the middle of the area housing the Studio Cabins). The Lounge on some ships has a fully stocked bar but all ship's Lounge area features a cappuccino maker, wine dispenser, cookies, fruit, juice and water. The group introduced themselves to each other and made plans to go to dinner as a group that night. Some people began using the designated white board to make plans for the next sea day and invited anyone who wanted to join to come join the fun. The notion that you're surrounded by others unencumbered by significant others or children made the atmosphere very open to the idea of inviting others to join you and feeling open to accepting those invitations when offered.



What resulted for the rest of the cruise was each night the group met at 5pm in the Lounge for a social hour. One of the bartenders came down and took drink orders; we talked about our day and what we were thinking of doing that night and generally met new and exciting people. The NCL Solo Host would make dinner reservations for whoever wanted to dine together which kept us from having to wait in line for the larger tables. She also secured seating for the shows for our large group and had the ability to seat us in the penthouse seating area (very swanky!). The total group consisted of about 40 people, but smaller groups formed as people developed friendships or common interests. There was never a feeling of trying to set people up in a romantic sense - it was simply a group of like-minded independent people that enjoyed the company of others for dinner and shows.

I had an opportunity to tour one of the Studio Cabins and NCL has done a great job of scaling down all unnecessary space and leaving only what is essential in a room. They've utilized great storage options and the room has a very trendy, upscale feel.

As the cruise progressed, I began developing amazing friendships with some of my solo traveler companions. We would meet up for putt-putt golf, trying out the water slides, lunch at Jimmy Buffett's Margaritaville for burgers, or simply enjoying the pool deck or spa.

As a first time NCL cruiser and the concept of freestyle cruising on an extremely large ship, here are some of the additional things I really enjoyed: the vast array of restaurants (29 dining options to choose from each day), an interesting collection of bars and wine options (including a craft brewery and a mojito bar), endless options for activities and entertainment through the day (events started around 9am and were scheduled through midnight).

What I thought would be a cruise to be by myself turned in to an adventure of new friends and experiences that wouldn't have been near as fun by myself!