

Fun in Fort Lauderdale

Rebecca Underwood visits Fort Lauderdale and discovers all it has to offer.

Should you be contemplating an escape from the winter chill, consider having some fun and sunshine in Fort Lauderdale. Holland America's Ms Eurodam, launched in 2008, you may recall, was anchored off Guernsey in the summer of 2009. She is now sailing out of Fort Lauderdale bound for the glittering warm waters of the Caribbean Sea.

Cruising on the ocean is a truly wonderful experience onboard the elegant Ms Eurodam. Every comfort and facility and the highest level of service is provided for her very fortunate passengers, which last October included me and my mother!

The five star accommodations are spacious and modern with plush, elegant and tasteful furnishings and the deluxe staterooms include a veranda. Watching the sunset, whilst reclining on a comfortable lounge on your own private veranda and sipping on your pre dinner drink, is unforgettable. The emphasis is on relaxation and tranquillity and is absolutely ideal for those of us who love to be spoilt and pampered.

Ms Eurodam offers two outdoor pools, one with a retractable roof, an excellent fitness centre, beautiful teak decks to entice those who enjoy an early morning brisk walk and the Greenhouse Spa featuring a hydrotherapy pool, thermal suite, steam and an aromatic room for the less energetic.

First class dining choices include the very popular Pinnacle Grill, offering the most sophisticated culinary experience and the Tamarind Pan Asian restaurant, both presenting an impressive wine menu and therefore reservations are essential! There is a freedom to dine option in the Rembrandt, ensuring that passengers do not need to adhere to strict timings. For those casual days the Lido features an extensive selection of international dishes or you may wish to sample the delicious



Italian fare in the Canaletto. All of the restaurants are superb and both of us over indulged on occasion, which is of course expected!

An extensive choice of after dinner entertainment includes Las Vegas style shows, a delightful piano bar where guests can enjoy coffees and liqueurs whilst listening to the subtle strains of violins, live music in the lounges and a lively nightclub attracting those who love to dance and those who love to observe.

We visited the ports of San Juan, St Thomas, Grand Turk, and Half Moon Cay in the Bahamas, where I joined an excursion to Stingray Cove for an encounter with the resident stingrays. Swimming with and feeding those remarkable and graceful creatures was only one of the many highlights of a truly exceptional cruise.

After a smooth disembarkation we arrived at The Lago Mar Resort, a family owned property with the most wonderful and peaceful location on ten acres of land and with a five hundred feet beachfront, which is well known as a nesting place for Sea



Turtles. This hotel was the first in Broward County to feature on the Conde Nast Gold List and it is easy to see that the outstanding level of service has been maintained. The accommodation is spacious and comfortable with a Mediterranean theme that creates a relaxing and welcoming atmosphere. Many of the well known hotel chains seem unable to offer this level of service and can become rather 'corporate'. It is refreshing to stay in a hotel where the staff remember your name and are genuinely happy to greet you and offer their utmost attention and assistance.

After a blissful slumber and a hearty breakfast our excellent driver and guide from Miami Nice Tours arrived in a very slick limo and we headed for the Everglades where we embarked on an absolutely thrilling air boat ride sliding through a river of grass with alligators observing the irritating humans disturbing their peace! This excursion is wonderful for all the family and following the ride there is an entertaining show where selected members of the squirming audience are invited to kiss the baby alligator! The look on my mother's face was priceless!

After retreating to the comfort and style of our limo we headed for the trendy Las Olas Boulevard to browse around the designer shops and art galleries then onto the popular Indigo restaurant in the heart of all the action for a delicious al fresco lunch whilst watching all the beautiful people strolling by. For an exceptional dining experience by night I recommend the nearby Tuscan Grill for excellent service, an impressive menu and an enchanting atmosphere.

After another restful night at the tranquil Lago Mar it was time for us dedicated bargain hunters to do some serious shopping! The Sawgrass Mills Mall, the largest mall in Florida is crammed with over three hundred and fifty shops including Calvin Klein, Escada, Furla, Giorgio Armani, Hugo Boss, Kenneth Cole, Ralph Lauren, Valentino and on and on! Gripping on to the credit card proved to be impossible and laden with overflowing bags and an increasing appetite we headed for the adjacent sophisticated Italian restaurant Villaggio. This is the place to be seen. Wonderful food, excellent service and crammed with beautiful people, but where were you?

Treat yourself! Book a trip to Fort Lauderdale.



Holland America's Ms Eurodam



Ms Eurodam's Lido Deck Pool



Ms Eurodam suite



Everglades Air Boat



Ms Eurodam's Silk Den Lounge



Feeding Caribbean Sting Rays