

## **TABLE TALK / TO THE POINT :**

**JUNE 2010**

**THE LATEST :** This is the latest submission yet. Unfortunately your Hon. Editor has been preoccupied with the preparation of a history of the East Dockyard at Simon's Town which has to be with the publishers by the end of August – hence the abbreviated newsletter. Hopefully things will be back to normal next month.

**CRUISING ON THE QUEEN MARY 2 : PART TWO :THE COST OF CRUISING WITH CUNARD -** A “NO FLY CRUISE” saves you the cost of air travel but this is not possible from South Africa unless you go on a Mediterranean Shipping Company short cruise out of Durban. If you want to cruise with Cunard or any other shipping company you will have to fly somewhere in the World to join your ship and then fly home again which all adds to the cost of your cruise.

There are quite a number of cruise ship companies with a variety of charges but let us consider top of the range - Cunard.

The cost of your state room can vary with when you book it and where you book it so it is best to shop around and look for the best deal. One of the regular comedian's jokes on board is about when different nationalities meet and what their first question is. The British always first ask how much you paid for your cruise; but it is best not to know what other people have paid then you won't be upset. I recall a cruise on the Russian inland waterways which I booked in South Africa and it appeared that I had paid more than anyone else on board so you can imagine I was not amused!

The *Queen Mary 2* is a relatively expensive ship as cruise ships go so I will give you a daily rate which is the best way of studying cost and is per person based on the seventeen night cruise from Sydney to Cape Town. I have just received Cunard's schedule for 2011 and the daily rate varies on the length of the cruise and where the ship is going to.

At the top of the scale you have a Super Deluxe Suite at about R15 000.00 a day and this is where I would love to travel. At the bottom of the scale there is a standard inside suite at about R1800.00 a day and the middle range are balcony suites at R2 500.00. You don't have cabins any more they are now “staterooms.” Your stateroom is small compared with a hotel unless you are in Super Deluxe but it has everything you need - TV, fridge, safe, telephone, individual air conditioning and is, of course, en suite including a very heavy bath robe.

When considering the cost per day don't forget you are travelling five star and look at what you are receiving for your money which you would not be receiving in a hotel. You are eating excellent food and can eat 24 hours a day if you so wish in any of the several restaurants. All dining is formal dress except when leaving port and then it becomes semi formal but a jacket must be worn at all times unless you go into one of the casual restaurants.

The service is perfect no matter where you are and the crew is trained to smile and greet you no matter what time of day it is. I have had some illuminating chats with the night shift at 5-30 AM while walking the promenade deck. When in dangerous waters there are Ghurkas manning the sonic blasters, who are always interesting to chat to.

Entertainment is marvellous, with cabaret in the evening, jazz bands, calypso bands, big bands, little bands, classical pianists, harpists, string quartets etc. etc. etc. all in different parts of the ship, plus of course karaoke and disco. You can learn to tango, line dance and any other dance or play bridge, speak French, flower arrange, fold napkins and so on to make sure you never get bored.

There are movies, TV, a planetarium, lectures on a variety of subjects [Bishop Tutu I was not impressed with]. Then there are deck games with golf, tennis, and net ball etc. The days are not long enough and quite exhausting so it is very pleasant to relax and have a quiet pint of Bass in the Golden Lion pub [there are thirteen bars on board} or just sit on deck and read a good book from their extensive library. They didn't have the Koran in English that I requested which I thought was a poor show.

On the down side is the cost of extras. A pint of ale and a gin and tonic cost about R50.00 each. A bottle of mediocre wine is about R300.00. Incidentally our table sommelier was a Zulu girl from Durban. Photographs, which they take constantly, are R175.00 each if you wish to buy them. There is a casino waiting to take your money - which entertains my wife but fortunately not me. Tours in port are extortionate and rarely less than US\$ 100.00 which I have found is not worth the money and I prefer to take a taxi and look around on my own. Sometimes it isn't possible to take a taxi and if you want to see a specific place then you must take a tour. The Internet is very good and not too pricey so I did my daily e-mails and also spoke on Skype. My son in law in Sydney was tapping into the bow camera on QM2 and could watch the ship docking and what the weather was like but don't ask me how he did it. There are many shops on board including Harrods which are also pricey but there are daily sales which are inexpensive.

It is best to keep a close watch on your bar bill so there are no shocks at the end of your voyage.

When you check in you have to present your credit card for a rubbing and if paying by cash or travellers cheques you have to give a deposit which is to cover your bar bill etc. Tipping has been taken out of your hands and a charge of 11 US\$ per day is made for those in the lower priced staterooms and 20.00\$ for the up market guests.

I think I have covered most of the costs involved in cruising Cunard so have a great trip and, what the Hell, spend all your SKI (*Spending Kids Inheritance*) money!! – ***Our Globe-Trotting Travel Correspondent.***

*They say that you can always tell a Yorkshireman ..... but you can't tell him much.*

*A London lawyer and a Yorkshireman are sitting next to each other on a long flight to Leeds .*

*The lawyer is thinking that Yorkshire men are all 'cloth cap and clogs' and that he can fool them easily...*

*So the lawyer asks if the Yorkshireman would like to play a fun game.*

*The Yorkshireman is tired and just wants to take a nap, so he politely declines and tries to catch a few winks. The lawyer persists and says that the game is a lot of fun.*

*'I ask you a question, and if you don't know the answer, you pay me only £5; you ask me one, and if I don't know the answer, I will pay you £500.'*

*As may be expected, this catches the Yorkshireman's attention and to keep the lawyer quiet, he agrees to play the game.*

*The lawyer asks the first question. 'What's the distance from the Earth to the moon?'*

*The Yorkshireman doesn't say a word, reaches in his pocket, pulls out a five-pound note, and hands it to the lawyer.*

*Now, it's the Yorkshireman's turn.*

*He asks the lawyer, 'What goes up a hill with three legs, and comes down with four?'*

*The lawyer uses his laptop, searches all the references he knows. He uses the air-phone; he searches the Net and even the British Library. He sends e-mails to all the smart friends he knows, all to no avail. After over an hour of searching, he finally gives up.*

*He wakes up the Yorkshireman and hands him £500. The Yorkshireman pockets the £500 and goes straight back to sleep.*

*The lawyer is going crazy not knowing the answer. He wakes the Yorkshireman up and asks, 'Well! What goes up a hill with three legs and comes down with four?'*

*The Yorkshireman says 'Buggered if I know!'; reaches in his pocket, hands the lawyer £5 and goes back to sleep.*

*Don't mess with Yorkshiremen; they're not daft, they only talk different.*