

Discovering different dimensions of luxury aboard NCL Prima

From go-karting, gourmet fare to Broadway-class shows, a voyage aboard Norwegian Cruise Line's latest ship, Prima, is much more than a vacation. It is a world wrapped in luxury with something for everyone.

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Touchdown Miami! When I set foot in this happening beach destination in southern United States after an excruciatingly long 23-hour flight, I was dead tired. But the excitement over what was to follow on my journey kept my spirits high. I had travelled all the way to join the inaugural cruise of Norwegian Cruise Line's new luxury ship, *Prima*, from Miami to the Bahamas in the Caribbean.

After spending a day exploring Miami, which also happens to be one of the largest cruise terminal cities and perhaps the cruise capital of the world, it was time to board the chic ship that had only just been launched months earlier, in August. The first thought that flashed across my mind as I looked at the gigantic liner that can accommodate a staggering 3,000 people was, "How vast is this ship?"

Style and comfort onboard

After a couple of hours to complete the boarding procedure, it was time to head all the way up to Deck 12, which was to be my home for the next three days. I quickly underwent the mandatory safety drill and then proceeded to my room, which was the balcony stateroom, the largest cabin category on this ship. But aware that on board a ship the definition of large could be vastly different from what's onshore, I had tempered my expectations.

So, when I pushed open the door, I was pleasantly surprised to discover the first dimension of luxury onboard *Prima*. I was looking at a spacious room with two queen beds. Done in soft beige tones, it was bright and cheerful, with floor to ceiling glass doors that led to a balcony with two chairs. I could picture myself waking up for the sunrise the next day or lounging here to gaze at the beautiful aquamarine ocean or a star-studded sky. Decorated with an artwork by the bed, the room had a sofa, dressing table, television and ample storage to even put away my bag.

I soon found out that there were many other dimensions of luxury aboard the *Norwegian Prima*, such as more than



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■ Cruise



700 pieces of artwork, worth over USD 6 million, on display in various parts of the ship, diverse gourmet dining options for the gastronomes, a sculpture garden and entertainment that includes some scintillating theater. Then there is Haven, an exclusive luxury section with 107 suites which come with private elevators, an exclusive reception, round the clock butler service and the finest spirits and wines to tempt those with deep pockets.

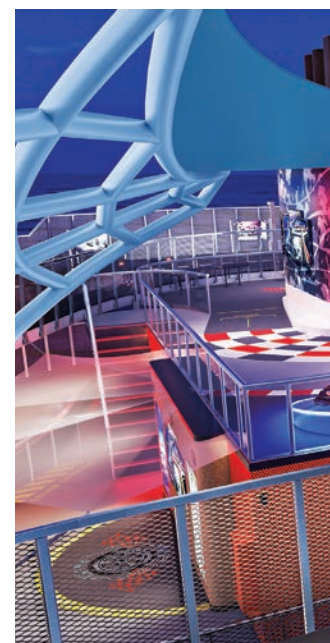
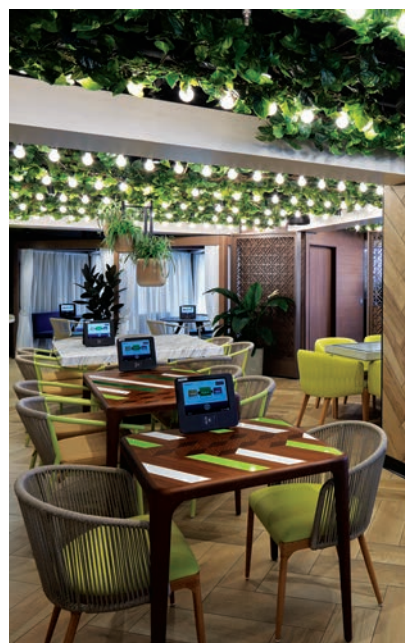
Gourmet dining

Ravenous by the time I had checked in and put away my bags in my cabin, I, along with my friend who was accompanying me, headed to Indulge Food Hall to get a bite. One of the several dining options in the ship with 11 counters, it offers cuisines ranging from East Asian, Mexican, Spanish to soups, salads and even Indian. After much thought, we opted for Mexican and Spanish and had loaded nachos and dates wrapped with bacon. For coffee lovers, there is also a Starbucks here for that caffeine fix.

On a ship that takes food to a whole new level, I soon found out that this was just one of the 35 dining spaces and bars, including eight specialty restaurants. After such a good meal at Indulge Food Hall, I decided to check out some specialty restaurants and Italian being my favourite cuisine, that had to be my first dinner.

All dressed up, I and my friend headed to Onda by Scarpetta, where the beef carpaccio and the short rib ravioli along with a couple of pizzas for the table lived up to the *Prima's* boast of being a gourmet's haven. The next day, we dined at the Mediterranean restaurant, Palomar, where we had a delicious preparation of sea bass.

Lunch, being the more casual meal, was at the Local Bar & Grill, which isn't a specialty restaurant, but has burgers, sandwiches, salads, grills, hot dogs and Tex Mex. We ordered a mix of everything and Mojito to go along with it. For foodies like me, meals aboard *Prima* surpassed my expectations.



Play dates

I was on a short, three-day version of the regular cruise to get a feel of the new ship, so there was no time to waste. After my hunger pangs were sated, it was time to head out for go-karting on what is supposed to be the largest racetrack on sea. Yes, you read that correctly. The *Prima Speedway* is a three-level track where you can zoom up to a speed of over 50 kmph.

Excited to try it, I sat in the car after the safety briefing instructions, even as my fellow travellers cheered me along. But somehow, I did not manage to gather top speed. I was cruising along slowly rather than rushing, maybe because the Miami skyline and the glorious sunset were distracting me. I have to say that though go karting in the middle of the vast sea offers a different thrill from when you do it on land.

For those who feel a vacation is incomplete without an adrenaline rush, there are other options including some



“firsts” on sea such as a slide called the Drop. It lives upto its name as the floor beneath you literally drops as you plunge down 10 stories in what felt like a flash. My friends got apprehensive when they saw me come squealing down and chickened out. After that, I went on to try The Rush, where two people can compete on dual slides, but after the speed of the Drop, I found this not to be in such a big rush.

The third slide is at the pool deck. Aptly named Tidal Wave, this is where a gush of water pushes one down as you sit in a tube and it was fun. I could have done this repeatedly but as we were there for just three days and there is so much to explore, experience, eat and drink on this ship there was no time to return for seconds.

Let the shows begin

Beyond cabins, cuisines and activities, *Prima* also offers a luxurious diversity in entertainment options. To sample some, after dinner, I headed to the sprawling three-story Prima Theatre for a show. Noise Boys is a tap dancing and beat boxing show with so much energy

that you are likely to be swaying on your seat as well. Next evening it was time for an excellent enactment of one of the most famous and sensational musicals about the life of the American singer, Donna Summer. The show, *Summer: The Donna Summer Musical* features more than 20 of her songs and had me spellbound. For sure, theatre enthusiasts will not miss Broadway aboard this ship.

What was even more surprising was how the Prima Theatre, where the shows are staged, transforms into a nightlife venue after the performances as the seats fold up to create a space where you can dance the night away. The Disco Wonderland is where dancers in costumes make you sway and take you back to the days when Disco was popular.

A day in the Bahamas

One of the high points of the cruise was the brief but beautiful encounter with the Bahamas. After a day at sea, *Prima* was ready for docking at Great Stirrup Cay, a private island in the Berry Islands at the Bahamas, owned by Norwegian Cruise Line and I was really excited to step into a new country.

We reached by 10 am and a Starbucks bike was there to welcome us. I had never seen that before and it looked really cute. My eyes fell on a tall lighthouse beautifully painted by an artist. It doubles up as a point for ziplining. But the famed blue water and white sand beaches of the Bahamas, dotted with umbrellas and sun beds, were so inviting that I skipped the many activities on offer such as snorkeling and swimming with the pigs. Yes, swimming with the pigs!

We walked to an area called Silver Cove, an exclusive retreat with villas, a spa and a bar, where we started the day on a high note with a glass of bubbly. After a few drinks, it was time to wade into the water. Like with all Norwegian Cruise Line ships, drinks and food are always at hand. There was a beach grill, food truck, a taco stall and a few bars on the island. We danced with a Cuban woman who taught us how to play local instruments. We got back to the ship by the evening, but I want to return some day and explore the country properly.

The time in the Bahamas did end rather soon but the inviting activities and entertainment on board the ship kept me engaged. On the return voyage to Miami, I played darts and tried my hand at mini golf. *Prima* also has an indoor gaming room called Galaxy Pavilion with 14 games and two escape rooms. Then there is a casino with slot machines and games, but I left that for another time, after all, how much can you squeeze into just three days? Mentally I made a list of things to do next time I come and getting a treatment at the opulent spa was one of them.

As I packed my bags and got ready to step out of the ship, my eyes fell on the chairs on my balcony. With all the action, I realised I never got the time to lounge on them and take in the ocean’s beauty. I will leave that for another cruise and another time! 📍