

**Fred Olsen - Caribbean Mega Fam trip 2019** - Gemma Cunningham

In December 11 lucky travel agents were taking on a trip to the Caribbean with Fred Olsen on board Braemar. We were flown Premium economy via Paris to St Maarten with Air France, the flight was comfortable and the service on board friendly, the transition from one aircraft to the other was swift and easy with our baggage checked right through to our final destination.

On arrival into St Maarten we were reunited with our baggage quickly and passed through immigration fairly quickly, the airport itself is very small.

The Sonesta Maho hotel was my home for 2 nights and we were welcomed with cold towels and our hotel bracelets for access to our rooms meaning you don't have to worry about a door card or keys!

The hotel is fairly high rise with great sea views from its elevated position at one of Maho beach (famous for the low flying aeroplanes which come across the beach).



The hotels facilities are vast! They offer gym facilities, have a great spa area and even offer Yoga and morning runs out from the hotel. The main pool area is located right in the middle of the hotel grounds with a swim up bar and comfortable loungers with the restaurants and another bar area located just in front with beautiful views of the ocean. There is a separate area of the hotel called Ocean pointe this is adult only and more private, guests staying here can use all facilities at the main hotel but guest staying in the main hotel cannot use the facilities at Ocean Point.



This area has a relaxing lagoon style pool with a fabulous restaurant overlooking the Ocean and a roof top bar/terrace for watching the sunset and listening to live music.

The Island is split into the Danish and French sides unfortunately due to French strikes we were unable to visit this side of the Island however the Danish side has so much to offer, we enjoyed the delights of the Rum distillery with its many different flavours and shown how this is made.



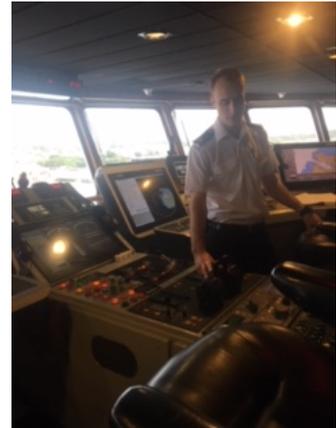
We also had a tour of the Nectar lab which offers beauty products made from only natural ingredients! This was very informative and the shop fully stocked with her products. We also visited the town of Philipsburg for its many shops, bars and restaurant's located on the beach promenade great for having a walk around.

One of St Maartens great beaches





On our second day in St Maarten we made our way to join the ship 'Braemar' and were given a full ship's tour including the 'Bridge'.



A timeless style flows throughout *Braemar's* interiors. Large windows bathe the ship's public areas in natural light and provide spectacular views, and the polished wooden fixtures, decadent fabrics and elegant décor assume the feel of a traditional country house hotel. One of the focal points on *Braemar* is the beautifully painted, five-deck-high Atrium area, while the cascading outside decks at the stern enhance the ship's elegant profile and offer stunning vistas no matter which outside deck, you're on.

Capable of comfortably accommodating up to 929 passengers, *Braemar* has an un-crowded, intimate feel, with friendly staff providing a fantastic level of personal, attentive service and catering to your every need.

On board, guests can enjoy an unforgettable cruise holiday in the comfort and ample space of recently refreshed rooms and suites, and updated restaurants, bars and lounges offering sumptuous cuisine, a wide range of beers, wines and spirits, and fantastic daily entertainment from talented performers in the Neptune lounge.



I was lucky to have been given a superior balcony cabin located on deck 7 with a seating area and lots of cupboard space.

The balcony was great for sitting out and watching us arrive into a different port every morning! This also is good for letting in the fresh air. Plugs on board are European so a travel adaptor is defiantly recommended however you can get one from guest services. The Braemar offers all types of cabin accommodations from inside, Ocean View, Balcony and then the suites.

Formal nights are also offered on board giving you an excuse to get dressed up and even get your hair and nails done in the ships own salon.

Evening shows are off a high standard and are varied. I especially enjoyed the crews show! There is also a card table for Black Jack and a roulette table. I tried my luck on black jack and did rather well!! The croupier was helpful with the rules and also very patient by going at a slower pace for novices like my-self. There is also dance hosts on board offering dance lessons and will take you for a spin around the dance floor.



We were treated to a mouth-watering meal in the ships speciality restaurant 'The Grill' located toward the back of the ship offering an outdoor dining experience, the steak is highly recommended! And the location romantic and exclusive.



Every evening a list of the following day's activities and offers are placed into your cabin on the side table or if you have a smart phone you can now download the Fred Olsen cruise app and everything can be found there! This is great for planning your next day of events.

With my 5 nights on board we visited: St Kitts, Antigua, St Lucia, Grenada and finally Barbados before being flown home with British Airways, chartered by Fred Olsen in Premium economy. This is a superb class to travel in and I can't recommend it enough for those wanting extra legroom, tentative service and to easily get rest on the over-night flight back to the UK. Guests are asked to leave their cases out the night before disembarkation and do not see them again until you arrive at the airport to check in! Very easy and stress free.

### **Island destination guide:**

US dollars are accepted everywhere in the Caribbean. Fred Olsen can change most currency on board for you.

**St Kitts & Nevis:** - St Kitts is the larger of the 2 Caribbean islands that comprise the nation of Saint Kitts and Nevis. It's known for rain forested mountains and beaches of white, grey, and black sands. On its south western coast is the capital, Basseterre, and Georgian buildings from the colonial era.

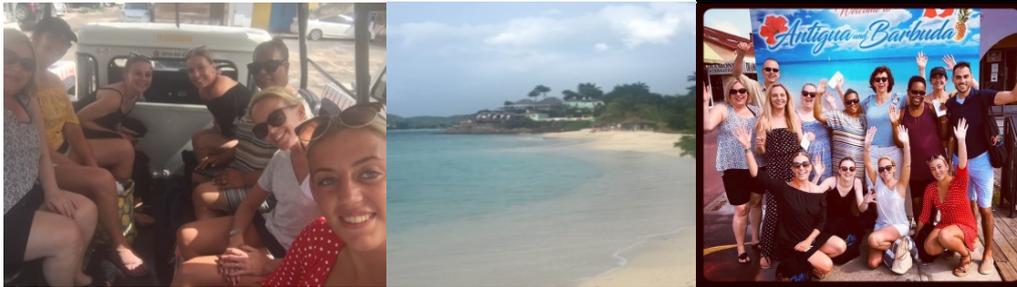
This island has a natural jagged beauty and what better way of seeing this than on a ship excursion on the Scenic Railway. This lovely little train slowly makes its way along the coast and offers either out-door seating on the top deck or below indoor seating on the lower deck. All drinks (including rum punch) are included whilst on board and there is also a local choir that sings.



### Antigua:

Antigua is one of the 2 major islands that make up the Caribbean nation of Antigua and Barbuda. Ringed with coral reefs, the island is known for its many sandy beaches. Set along English Harbour, restored Nelson's Dockyard, which Admiral Horatio Nelson made his base in the 1780s, includes a marina and the Dockyard Museum.

Trails lead up to Shirley Heights, a former military lookout with panoramic views that are just stunning. We were taken on a jeep safari of the island which included a stop at a stunning beach, the guide was informative and it was a fun way to see this island! (my favourite Caribbean island)



### St Lucia:

St Lucia boasts a pair of dramatically tapered mountains, the Pitons, on its west coast. The coast is home to volcanic beaches, reef-diving sites, luxury resorts and fishing villages. Trails in the interior rainforest lead to waterfalls such as the 15m-high Toraille, that pours over a cliff into a garden.



For the more adventurous, a visit to the Zip wire experience is not to be missed. With 8 separate runs you can feel truly exhilarated.

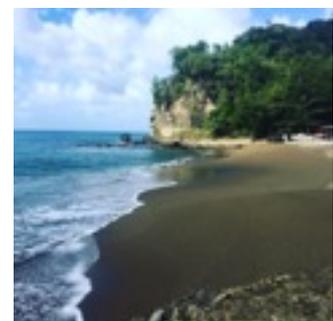
We visited the Volcanic area of St Lucia with its famous mud bath where you can soak in warm waters before covering yourself in mud!

Our lunch was taken at the Beacon Restaurant, offering uninterrupted views of the beautiful towering Pitons.



This was followed by a visit to 'Glittering Sands Beach', a new beach side experience offering food and drink served whilst you bathe under the warm sun or take a refreshing dip in the ocean.

The capital, Castries, is a popular cruise port and gives easy access to get out and explore this stunning island.



**Grenada:**

Grenada is a brightly coloured island comprising of a main island and smaller surrounding islands. Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Dubbed the “Spice Isle,” the hilly main island of Grenada is home to numerous nutmeg plantations.

Stunning waterfalls to visit including Annandale Waterfall, suitable to swim in! It’s also the site of the capital, St. George’s, whose colourful homes, Georgian buildings and early-18th-century Fort George overlook narrow Carénage Harbour. To the south is Grand Anse Beach (absolutely stunning), with resorts, bars and restaurants.



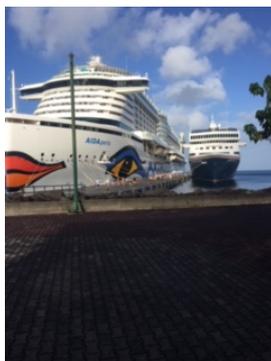
**Barbados:**

Barbados is an eastern Caribbean island and an independent British Commonwealth nation. Bridgetown, the capital, is a cruise-ship port with colonial buildings and Nidhe Israel, a synagogue founded in 1654. Around the island are beaches, botanical gardens, the Harrison’s Cave formation, and 17th-century plantation houses like St. Nicholas Abbey. Local traditions include afternoon tea and cricket, their national sport.

We were given a tour of Harrison’s Cave, which is taken inside a trolley allowing you to sit back and enjoy the many photo opportunities as you visit many areas for the cave system.



Carlisle beach is just stunning with its turquoise warm waters and easy walking access into Bridgetown. Both the Radisson and Hilton hotels are located on Carlisle beach.



Whilst in port in Grenada another cruise ship had docked, look at the size difference!!

This shows the true size of Braemar with its boutique, intimate feel on board compared to the bigger, louder and busier cruise ships out there!

